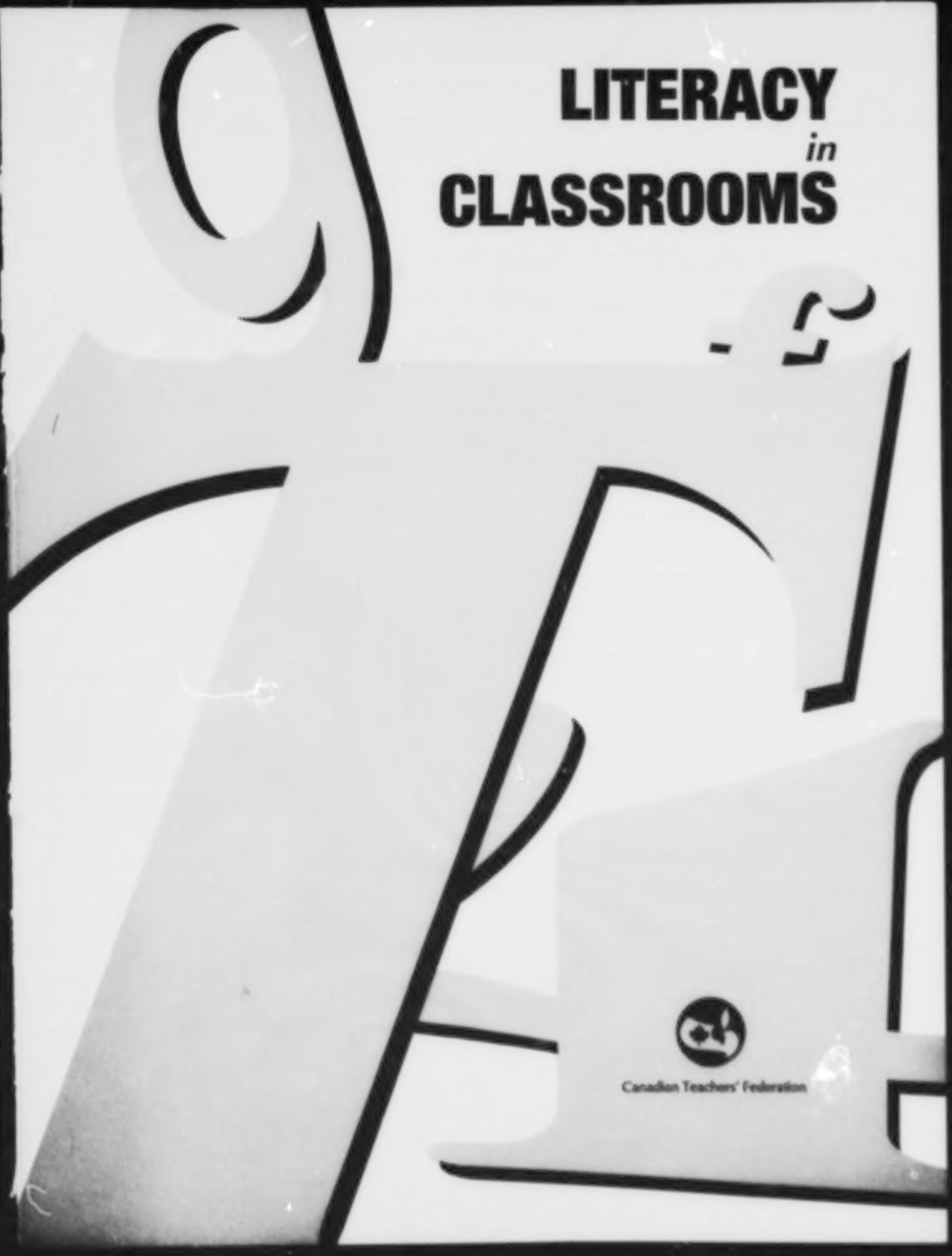

LITERACY *in* CLASSROOMS

Canadian Teachers' Federation

LITERACY IN CLASSROOMS

Reports of Classroom
Research Projects Conducted
by Teachers

Canadian Teachers' Federation
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FOREWORD

In October of 1989, teachers across Canada were invited to submit proposals for small-scale research projects, dealing with some aspect of literacy, to be carried out in their classrooms and communities. Through funding received from the National Literacy Secretariat of the federal Department of the Secretary of State it was possible to make available to each of twenty-one recipients a grant of $2,500 to assist in the conduct of the research project. Recipients of the grants were encouraged to reflect on current practices in schools and to draw on their professional knowledge and classroom insights to suggest or explore ways of helping students attain higher levels of literacy.

The grant recipients, who were selected by the provincial and territorial teachers' associations, received $1,500 initially and $1,000 following submission of the completed research report. Reports submitted by January 15, 1991, were eligible to compete for a National Award of $10,000. In February 1991 Linda Graves and Roberta Richert were selected as the winners of the National Award for their report *Promoting Reading: A Caring Partnership Approach*. Their report appears first in this collection of classroom research.

This volume contains reports of 13 of the projects for which grants were awarded. Although the research was carried out in many different parts of Canada, common themes are reflected in the reports presented here. For example, there is an emphasis on the need for parental participation in literacy and numeracy development, the beneficial effects of tutoring on both the tutors and the tutored, and the need for wide and varied classroom collections of books of interest to children. The reports also reflect on the strong connection between reading and writing, and explore the possibilities of the computer for helping all children develop the skills of an author. Finally, the reports stress that student reading for meaning and pleasure lies at the foundation of a literate society.

Readers should find much to savour, enjoy and perhaps emulate through this visit to Canadian classrooms.

Geraldine Gilliss
Director, Research and Information Services
Canadian Teachers' Federation

June, 1991

CONTENTS

Page

Graves, Linda, and Roberta Richert. 1
Promoting Reading: A Caring Partnership Approach

This project was designed to improve the reading levels of a Grade 3/4 class in a socioeconomically disadvantaged community by encouraging parent involvement and participation in the reading program. (Saskatchewan)

Gudlaugson, Patricia, Judith Ross-McClacherty
and Christina Schut 61
A Home Reading Program for Children for Whom English is a Second Language

This study examined the effects of a Home Reading Program on parental and student attitudes toward reading. (British Columbia)

Beil, Alison K. 84
Summer Paired Reading Project: Learning with Love

This project explored paired reading as a way for parents, as reading partners, to help their children improve reading fluency and comprehension during the summer recess from school. (Alberta)

Barkase, Connie, and Nancy Farrell. 115
Literature-Based Co-operative Reading Program

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect on children's appreciation of literature and reading ability of partnering older and younger children for reading for pleasure and having parents read to or with their children on a daily basis. (British Columbia)

Hoover, Catherine M. 135
Paired Reading in Portage: How Parents Made a Difference

This study investigated whether participation in a parents-as-partner paired reading program can have a beneficial effect on the developing reading skills of Grade 2 and 3 students. (Manitoba)

Cordell, Donald E. 160
1-2-1 Tutoring: An Impact Study

This project was a systematic study of a literacy program in which Grade 11 and 12 students provided daily one-to-one personal support and reading instruction for at-risk students in five elementary schools. (Ontario)

Gabert, Sheila. 172
The Use of the Reading Styles Inventory in Increasing Reading Rates and Comprehension of Middle Level Students

This study investigated the effect on Grade 7 students' reading ability and interest in reading of attempts to determine the learning styles of individual students and adapt instruction to those styles. (Saskatchewan)

Black, Kerry, Karen Demassi and Louise Novinger-Grant. 204
Mathematical Literacy: It's for Everyone

A case study approach was used to explore the written and oral responses to mathematical instruction of a group of elementary children with learning difficulties. (Alberta)

Calder, John, Carl Killen and George McCaffrey. 224
K.V. Literacy Profile Project

In this study the researchers developed a literacy profile questionnaire to be used with students entering high school from a number of junior high schools. (New Brunswick)

Leppington, Susan M. 239
Sustaining the Joy: A Study Into Adolescent Aliteracy

Information was gathered through surveys of students and community libraries in order to explore the reasons why adolescents lose interest in reading as a leisure activity. (Ontario)

Owen, Trevor. 258
Computer-Mediated Writing: The Writer in Electronic Residence

This project explored the role of technology for writing in a secondary English class and for extending that experience through on-line communication with students, writers and teachers throughout Canada, North America and the world. (Ontario)

Gabriel, Martha. 262
Let's Write Together

This study explored the change in children's attitudes toward writing as they participated in an intensive writing experience. (Prince Edward Island)

Strong, Elizabeth L., and Lori Wilki. 291
Nurturing Early Literacy: A Literature Based Program for At-Risk First Graders

Through an ethnographic participant observer approach the researcher studied the effect of a literature based literacy program on a group of at-risk first graders. (Newfoundland)

PROMOTING READING
A CARING PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Linda Graves
Roberta Richert

LITERACY is one of the most keenly discussed issues in today's society because of its elusive nature. Never before has the ability, or the inability, to read, write, and comprehend, received so much attention. Before the International Year of Literacy there were countless studies analyzing the illiterate. These results could have been cited based on practical experiences without the scientific surveys. However, the documented research has caught the attention of those in power, and as a result numerous associations have been founded and numerous grants awarded, including the Canadian Teachers' Federation grants for Research on Literacy.

We are very pleased to be recipients of a C.T.F. Grant for Research on Literacy. We teach in an inner city school located in a run-down apartment-riddled area of Saskatoon. The community contains a high percentage of people of native ancestry. As teachers, we are concerned with the limited academic growth of the students. Poor attendance and continual transience, uncaring and often abusive families, are easily and quickly noted as obvious reasons for limited achievement.

What can we do to make a difference in young lives so destined for a continuous cycle of illiteracy and poverty?

Ideas were outlined in the proposal submitted. The proposal included a concentrated and intensive language arts program with two qualified teachers, and initiatives and strategies involving parents, high school students, and community personnel.

To ensure that the directions for our project paralleled current research and findings, a review of the literature was done.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

David Seeley begins to address the problem in his article, "Educational Partnership and Dilemmas of School Reform". As he states, schools have been regarded by bureaucrat, educator, parent and student as a service industry -- as an educational service industry. Little attention has been paid to learning because it "is hard to define, control, or be held accountable for". He states:

> Under the service-delivery model, everyone blames everyone else. The public blames the schools for delivering shoddy services -- the schools blame the public for not providing enough money for better services. Parents blame teachers for poor teaching. Teachers blame parents for poor parenting. Everyone can feel satisfied that someone else is responsible for the "failure" of the schools.
>
> (Seeley, 1984, p. 386)

Seeley suggests an approach called "educational partnership" where the home, school and community share the responsibility for educating children, rather than the current system where schools, as government agencies, assume responsibility for educating children. And here lies the dilemma. As Seeley points out:

> Most of the energy of the current wave of reform in education is still focused primarily on expanding and improving school services without regard to the schools' relationships with parents, community, and the students themselves. (Seeley, 1984, p. 387)

Seeley suggests that a partnership can occur with very little money, with limited bureaucratic control and with the focus on true learning goals.

Further review of the literature focuses on the potential "partnership" in two parts:

1. parent involvement and its effects, and
2. reading aloud as a specific means of involvement.

Parent Involvement

Considerable emphasis has been placed on research into parent involvement at Johns Hopkins University. Joyce Epstein describes a major philosophical difference in opinion which certainly contributes to the dilemma of sanctioning the partnership that Seeley suggests.

> Teachers have strong opinions about parent involvement.

> Some believe that they can be effective only if they obtain parental assistance on learning activities at home. Others believe that their professional status is in jeopardy if parents are involved in activities that are typically the teachers' responsibilities. [This latter] perspective emphasizes the inherent incompatibility ... competition, and conflict between families and schools and supports the separation of the two institutions. (Epstein, 1986, p.277)

A study surveying parents of 1,269 first, third and fifth graders and thirty-six "case" teachers was completed in Maryland in 1981. The study examined parents' awareness of teachers' efforts, knowledge about the school program and evaluation of teachers. Parents generally felt positive about their schools and teachers; however, they "believed" the schools could do more to involve them in learning activities to help their children at home". (Epstein, 1986):

> Teachers who included the family in the children's education were recognized by parents for their efforts and were rated higher than other teachers on interpersonal and teaching skills. Parents' reports suggest that teachers control the flow of information to parents. By limiting communication and collaborative activities, teachers reinforce the boundaries that separate the two institutions. (Epstein, 1986, p. 295)

A second study discussed by Joyce Epstein dealt with the parent involvement practices of some eighty-two teachers in regard to the more than 1,200 parents who were surveyed:

> "Parent involvement" refers to the teacher's requests and instructions to parents to assist at home with learning activities related to the children's school work. (Epstein, 1985, p. 19)

Three findings were significant:

1. The grade level -- Teachers of younger children tend to involve parents more frequently.

2. Parents active at school -- Parents actively involved at school are seen as more caring and more likely to carry out activities suggested.

3. Teacher commitment of time and energy -- Teachers conducting parent workshops involved parents more often. Parent involvement did/does require additional teacher time.

Positive effects, from the parents' perspective, of those teachers who involved parents were: recognition of teacher work, better understanding of the school program, greater insight on how to help their children, and higher rating of overall teaching ability.

Other researchers are much more specific and adamant in their discussions about parent involvement.

Dorothy Rich in an article entitled "Building on Family Strengths" (1979) states:

> As parents ourselves, we teachers have always worked with our own children, not expecting the school -- even the best schools -- to do the job alone. (Rich, 1979, p. 507)
>
> The overwhelming majority of parents, regardless of their socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, possess the basic strengths and abilities to help their children achieve.
>
> Make sure that parents know how important they are in determining their child's school success.
> (Rich, 1979, p. 507)

Rich suggests "Home Learning Recipes":

> The "recipes" are specific, practical, no-cost activities for learning at home. Their goal is to build family interaction and children's academic achievement without duplicating the school. (Rich, 1979, p. 509)

Winter, a program director, and Rouse, a professional parent educator, describe a Parents as Teachers (P.A.T.) program in Missouri.

During the last decades a P.A.T. program was piloted, and evaluated, and became instrumental in the mandating of "parent education and support services to families beginning at the child's birth" in the state of Missouri.

These authors quote Scollon and Scollon (1981):

> ...as a phenomenon, literacy is located in a complex set of behaviors, attitudes, values, institutions, and personal roles. Without acknowledging the learning environment of the home and developing strategies to build on family strengths, we cannot hope to make a difference in children's literacy. (Winter and Rouse, 1990, p. 382)

Anne Henderson, author and associate with the National Committee for Citizens in Education, states very succinctly that benefits of parent involvement include:

> . higher grade and test scores,
> . long-term academic achievement,
> . positive attitudes and behaviour,
> . more successful programs,
> . more effective schools. (Henderson, 1988, p. 60)

> Schools that relate closely to their communities outperform other schools. Children whose parents help them at home, and stay in touch with the school, score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. (Henderson, 1988, p. 60)

Long-term effects are also cited. When the level of parent involvement is high, students do better throughout their school career.

Nancy Chaukin and David Williams Jr. address the issue of teacher training for parent involvement. In presenting a case for parent involvement, their reasons are explicit:

> When parents are involved with their children's schools, increased learning takes place. Other advantages are also apparent:
>
> . a rise in student achievement score;
> . an increase in student attendance;
> . a reduction of student dropouts;
> . an improvement of student motivation, self-esteem, and behaviour, and
> . more parent and community support of the school.
> (Chaukin and Williams, 1988, p. 87)

In their study, Chaukin and Williams focused on the increase in teachers' responsibilities associated with parent involvement and the importance of teacher training to involve parents effectively.

In a condensed review of research relating to *The Expanding Role of Parents*, Carl Smith alludes further to the need for teacher training to encourage parent involvement, especially in reading.

Melton (1985) found that "Parents of successful children actually discussed their own reading and the books that their children read in school and at home. They showed a personal interest in the intellectual life of their children, especially as it related to books":

> Some parents may know instinctively how to encourage their children to read, and some may have learned how to stay actively involved with their children's reading growth in order to promote intellectual development. Most parents, however, probably need the direction and the encouragement of the school in order to know what to do. (Smith, 1988, p.68)

In an article for *Phi Delta Kappan*, Henderson makes similar statements. She outlines 35 studies on parent involvement and notes that "The findings of all the studies were positive: parent involvement in almost any form appears to produce measurable gains in student achievement."

Henderson says that students "profit from extra attention and help regardless of the sources, but help is most effective when it comes from parents. The key to achievement seems to lie in students' positive attitudes about themselves and their control over the environment. And these attitudes are largely formed at home ..." (Henderson, 1988, p. 149)

In concluding an article on "Parent Participation in the Language Arts Program", Gill Potter, college instructor in South Australia, states:

> Children will have many teachers in their lives but only one family. It must be the family who helps maintain the continuity of the child's life. (Potter, 1989, p. 28)

In the journal, *The Reading Teacher*, Terry Rasinski and Anthony Fredericks co-author "Working With Parents", "a column dealing with ways in which teachers might involve parents more in the learning of literacy abilities in school and at home".

They write, "The research is clear: Given proper guidance and support, parents can supplement, in powerful fashion, learning that takes place in the school".

And then they ask, "Yet, do we really take this assumption seriously"?

Rasinski and Fredericks review Henderson's research on parent involvement (quoted previously) and point out benefits to all three (students, parents, teachers) involved. "Parents developed better attitudes toward their schools, teachers worked to improve their instruction, and student performance in the academic areas increased." (Rasinski and Fredericks, 1989, p. 84)

Specific Parent Involvement: Reading Aloud

Under the heading "Effective Parent Practices" in a review of research by Steven Silvern, Becker (1983) is quoted:

> "Reading to the child" is the best-known, most researched and most frequently recommended parent practice that is significantly related to positive attitudes toward reading and reading achievement.
>
> Studies indicate that parents are more likely to more seriously value reading to the child if teachers point out the specific benefits to be gained from this activity.

Silvern also looked at studies examining interactive practices of parents reading to their children.

> The first interesting finding is that children who had higher performance scores on reading tasks were those who talked more about the story and asked more questions during the reading process than those children who did not.
>
> A second finding is that parents who initiated talks with their children about the books they were reading had children with significant higher reading achievement scores and more highly developed and expanded concepts than children whose parents did not. (Silvern, 1985, p. 44,45)

Silvern also reviewed research relating to material availability and modelling.

> Another well-known consistent research finding is that children with more positive attitudes and higher achievement levels in reading come from homes in which there is a wide range of reading materials available (Durkin, 1966; Sheldon and Carillo, 1952; Smith, 1971; Teale, 1978). It is the "availability", however, and not the ownership of reading materials which is crucial. Furthermore, research indicates when parents themselves read and model the reading process their children have more positive attitudes toward reading and higher achievement scores than children whose parents do not read. (Dix, 1976; Hansen, 1969; Siders and Sledjeski, 1978) (Silvern, 1985, p. 48)

In the "Distinguished Educator" series of *The Reading Teacher*, Jim Trelease discusses reading aloud to children.

Trelease reviews the vast amounts of research verifying the value of reading aloud to children, and scorns the pace at which society is accepting and putting into practice the evidence. "It's helpful to recognize the keys to Read-Aloud's success are also part of its liability: It is fun, it is simple, and it is cheap." Something easily obtainable or reachable cannot be valuable. Reading aloud exposes the student listener to:

- a positive reading role model;
- new information;
- the pleasures of reading;
- rich vocabulary
- good sentence and story grammar;
- a book he or she might not otherwise be exposed to;
- fully textured lives outside the student's own experience; and
- the English language spoken in a manner distinctively different from that in a television show.
(Trelease, 1989, p. 202)

Trelease states:

> As long as research demonstrates reading aloud to be a critical factor in the creation of a nation of readers, it is incumbent upon educators to ensure its success by convincing their business partners (parents) of this

> importance. No education program can survive without the support of parents. We can accomplish this in two ways: (a) by selling its importance to tomorrow's parents who are sitting in today's classrooms; and (b) by showing today's parents how simple and important reading aloud can be in promoting their children's literacy abilities. (Trelease, 1989, p. 203)

Rasinski and Frederick in their column "Working With Parents" (previously mentioned) in *Reading Teacher*, discuss three reasons for reading aloud:

> First, reading to children is a relatively easy activity for both parents and children." "It's inexpensive, mutually rewarding, and requires very little training or explanation.
>
> Second, reading aloud is one of the most effective techniques for promoting growth in reading. Several studies have documented the important role that reading aloud can play in literacy development throughout a child's life. Children who are read to by their parents are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary; they develop an internal sense of story and understand that reading is a process of getting meaning from written symbols.
>
> Third, and best of all, reading to children is an extremely enjoyable activity for both parent and child; the simple act of spending a few quiet minutes together at the end of a bustling day can be an extraordinary pleasure. Reading aloud gives parents and children a wonderful opportunity to be together in a close, interactive, and personal sort of way -- a type of closeness not possible from watching television together, playing games, or travelling in the car.
>
> (Rasinski and Fredericks, 1990, p. 344)

Kathy Ollila and Dr. Lloyd Ollila suggest "Using Parents as Teaching Partners in Supporting Reading Skills". They quote the position paper for the Right to Read (1972):

> Parents, like it or not, have a role as educators; the only question is how well they educate. The home environment may stimulate the child's sense of self, his interest, his

> perception, his desire to experiment or it may suppress these qualities. Parents may encourage the skills associated with reading and cognitive activities or they may provide no inspiration or even stifle incentive.
> (Ollila and Ollila, 1979, p. 34)

The article focuses on four ways of involving parents:

1) sending letters home discussing the reading program;
2) encouraging parents to read to their children;
3) encouraging children to read aloud to their parents; and
4) augmenting skill practice at home.

Each point is discussed. Regarding parents reading to children, the authors state, "The importance of their reading to their children cannot be overstressed to parents". (Ollila and Ollila, 1979, p. 34)

Regarding children reading to parents, the authors stress the importance of its being pleasurable. "Reading aloud to parents should not be an exercise in sounding out words, embarrassing pauses, and mounting tension." "The teacher will want to channel a child's home-reading experiences with books that are at the child's independent level rather than the instructional level." (Ollila and Ollila, 1979, p. 36)

Numerous articles have been written documenting and supporting the "Read aloud" strategy and then describing individual approaches to implementing the "Read aloud" strategy.

Elene Demos discusses several programs "that can integrate parents into the reading process. Programs that focus upon educating parents about the value and importance of the reading process are very prevalent in the current research". (Demos, 1987, p. 37) Mini-courses, workshops, communiques from school, and other ways of soliciting parent involvement are described. One of the ideas suggested is reading aloud. "One of the most important things a parent can do with their child is READ TO THEM. Reading aloud to children can positively affect their language development, their interest in books, their readiness for academics, their success in learning to read and their attitudes and values toward reading." (Demos, 1987, p. 37)

The release of *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*, and the profound statement "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" stimulated and motivated many educators.

Chester Finn Jr. and Kay McKinney describe several such initiated programs in "Reading: How the Principal Can Help". (1986) One principal visited each class and read aloud to the students. She then asked her teachers to read aloud every day. She wrote to the parents encouraging them to read aloud to their children. Other gimmicks were described, all in an effort to show that the principal placed a great deal of emphasis on reading aloud, as much emphasis as on the sports program!

The Report of the Commission on Reading (1984) advocates reading aloud by both researcher and child. Finn and McKinney wrote:

> Teachers who read good stories whet the appetites of their students for reading. Good teachers give their students lots of opportunities to read aloud. However, silent reading should go hand in hand with oral reading. For a child, reading an unfamiliar story aloud is like asking an actor to perform a play before he's seen the script.

Dorene Ross and Elizabeth Bondy discuss the importance of "Communicating with Parents about Beginning Reading Instruction". They point out that "Teachers must provide parents with some insight into the reading process and the ways in which young children learn. The abused practice of drill on isolated reading skills is based on an inaccurate view of reading (Bussis, 1982); no set of essential subskills or processes has yet been identified (Rosenshine, 1980)". A more holistic approach where children get meaning from print is more congruent with the way children learn. "Children who have pleasurable, meaningful experiences with reading are more likely to become avid readers than those faced with confusing drills". (Ross and Bondy, 1987, p. 273) The authors emphasize the importance of listening to a child read, but also emphasize the importance of reading to the child.

The City of York Board of Education implemented a Parents-As-Partners Program in 1984, to address the large number of children at the primary and junior levels not acquiring the literacy skills necessary to becoming successful students. The students, from a low income, high unemployment community within Metropolitan Toronto, were all experiencing problems. Through workshops, constant guidance, and monitoring by educators, parents were trained to spend at least 20 minutes per day listening to their child read. Three positive effects emerged:

1. Improved reading and literacy development, especially enjoyment of books.

2. Improved home and school relationship, increased co-operation and support for the child and the program.

3. Dramatically increased library circulation in both school and community libraries. (Shuttleworth, 1986, p. 42)

Another program, initiated as a spin-off, was Reading-Partners-Program where primary and junior classes were "twinned" and the pupils "partnered". Each pair of teachers selected a 30-minute period each week for the program. (Twinned students read to each other)

Frank McTeague, Co-ordinator of English, City of York concluded, "Traditional student services have little impact on the reading standards in inner-city or multiethnic areas. With the Parents-As-Partners program the prevention of reading failure becomes a more attainable goal". (Shuttleworth, 1986, p. 43)

A review of research relating to parent involvement would not be complete without mention of two projects in England which have received considerable attention: the Haringey Reading Project and the Belfield Reading Project.

> The overall purpose of the [Haringey] Project was to find out if there was a causal relationship between active parental help and reading performance.... The project involved not only the organization and monitoring of the intervention and the testing of attainment but also the collection of qualitative, descriptive information on what was happening in the homes and schools of each child's progress. (Weinberger, 1986, p. 159)

Testing was conducted at the end of 1975-76, 1976-77, 1977-78, and 1978-79. Intervention took place over a two-year period, 1976-78.

Some 1,867 children from six schools began in the study and 400-500 joined the sample in subsequent years. Children were six to eight years old and all from multiracial manual working-class families.

The intervention was well organized. Teams of educators visited homes, held meetings, trained parents, and monitored parent participation. Parents were simply asked to listen to their child read.

The effectiveness of this parent involvement was measured against schools where no parent involvement occurred, and also with schools where extra reading tuition was provided by a qualified teacher.

Conclusions reached based on qualitative and quantitative data were:

> Firstly, in inner-city, multiracial schools it is both feasible and practicable to involve nearly all parents in formal educational activities with infant and first-year junior school children, even if the parents are non-literate or largely non-English speaking. Secondly, children who receive parental help are significantly better in reading attainment than comparable children who do not. Thirdly, most parents express great satisfaction in being involved in this way by the schools, and teachers report that the children show an increased keenness for learning at school and are better behaved. Fourthly, the teachers involved in the home collaboration also reported that they found the work with parents worthwhile and they continued to involve parents with subsequent classes after the experiment was concluded, as did teachers who had taught parallel control classes during the intervention years. Fifthly, small group instruction in reading, given by a highly competent specialist teacher, did not produce improvements in attainment comparable in magnitude with those obtained from the collaboration with parents. Sixthly, the collaboration between teachers and parents was effective for children of all initial levels of performance, including those who at the beginning of the study were failing to learn to read. Finally, the fact that some children read to parents who could not themselves read English, or in a few cases cannot read at all, did not prevent improvement in the reading skills of those children, or detract from the willingness of the parent to collaborate with the school. (Tizard et al., 1982, p. 14)

The Belfield Project took place over a period of five years. Children in the project, ages five to eight, were mainly from white, working class families living on a low income, many unemployed, in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. "Parents of the children in the project were asked to hear their children read at home every night after school". Home visits were regular, especially to those homes experiencing difficulty maintaining involvement. This project used Home Reading Frequency (HRF) as the indicator term in analysis of the data.

In concluding authors of the project write, "The most striking point to be made is that the majority of families, in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, became involved at a consistent and high level over the three years they were in the project. (Weinberger et al., 1986, p. 173)

The Belfield Project did not find significant gains in reading achievement on test scores. They did find great attitudinal changes by parents, children, and classroom teachers.

Peter Hannon and Angela Jackson, authors of the report, write, "As a means of evaluating the overall impact of parental involvement, tests by themselves are quite inadequate". (Hannon and Jackson, 1987, p. 186)

Hannon and Jackson also studied the whole aspect of home visiting as it relates to the teaching of reading. No conclusive evidence was found. Home visiting was a major component of the Belfield Project. Hannon and Jackson admit that home visits are not always important. They suggest schools attempt to predict and estimate the possible benefits, and when appropriate conduct home visits. They suggest genuine reflection and documentation for further research if home visits seem beneficial.

Another study was conducted in primary schools in England after publicity occurred about the Haringey and Belfield Project. Bartlett, Hall, and Neale were concerned about a "group of children variously identified as remedial, dyslexic or backward". (Bartlett, 1984, p. 173)

They initiated a short term project designed to last six weeks. "There were four distinct events. First, the parents' evening, held at school without the children, where the parents were instructed on the reading process. Second, a workshop evening, again at school, where children attended with their parents and a teacher. Third, the daily practice at home. Finally, the feedback meeting at school, where the results were discussed". (Bartlett, 1984, p. 173)

The reading process discussed at the first meeting was crucial for parents to understand:

1. Reading is more than just decoding, and no method is intrinsically preferable for any child.

2. Learning to read after continued failure is probably more difficult than learning from scratch, and there are likely to be important emotional factors concomitant with the lack of success.

> 3. Criticism, no matter how gentle, has no part to play in helping failing readers.
>
> 4. Reading is acquired in identifiable steps that can be observed and anticipated during instruction.
>
> 5. In order to read, children must take risks. Some of the child's attempts will result in inaccurate utterances that are sources of valuable insights into the child's thoughts and are not to be seen as just mistakes.
>
> 6. Reading is an activity in which previous knowledge that can be used to guide perceptual processes is at least as important as knowledge gained as a result of exposure to symbols or the page. (Smith, 1978) (Bartlett, et al., 1984, p. 174)

Two conclusions must be noted:

> The project resulted in enhanced reading skills for a considerable number of children, many of whom were identified as failing readers.
>
> It was found that giving parents some insight into the reading process is acceptable to them, readily understood and highly motivating. (Bartlett et al., 1984, p. 177)

In conclusion, reference to "Paired Reading" as a strategy for parent involvement must be made. "Paired Reading" was clearly described in its origin:

> 1. Adult and child read together, the adult supplying all the words and the child taking his or her cue from the adult.
>
> 2. Adult and child begin reading together, then the adult refrains from saying certain words which the child supplies.
>
> 3. The child supplies more and more words, the adult only stepping in when the child experiences difficulties.

4. The child reads independently and accurately to the adult. (Prentice, 1987, p. 164)

Topping (1987) states, "There is a good deal of evidence suggesting that children who engage in Paired Reading schemes, which commonly last for a matter of a few months, make significant gains in reading scores". (p. 608)

A simpler method is referred to as Relaxed Reading. Its advantage over Paired Reading is that no instruction or supervision of parent/child participation is required. Relaxed reading is a time when parent and child read together in a warm, positive, and satisfying environment.

Discussion

When the proposal for the Literacy Project was submitted, there were definitely preconceived notions about ways to improve the educational services offered to the students at Community Elementary School.* The review of the literature not only confirmed those beliefs and convictions, but strengthened them.

Few parents visit Community Elementary School out of either interest or concern for their children's academic work. We were concerned that a shift in parental attitude was essential if the students were to make academic gains. Jim Trelease states, "No education program can survive without the support of parents". (Trelease, p. 201) All of the literature reviewed was unanimous in this belief.

Epstein's research describes the usual way in which parents support the school. Parents volunteer to "help out" at school, and that is just what they do: machine copying, cutting, pasting, mailing and filing. Their help is seen as supportive and it is, but it is really not a partnership in learning. At Community Elementary and other inner city schools this "helping out" rarely occurs. The support of "helping" parents is not seen and a strong feeling of non-support exists instead, rightly or wrongly, consciously or unconsciously.

Much of the literature reviewed described or involved a very different clientele than inner city students and their parents. Especially different at Community Elementary is the high percentage of North American Urban Indian population. Rich, in discussing family strengths, suggested parents generally have the skills necessary to help their children. This suggestion could probably be easily refuted in most inner city communities. Parents often do not have the literacy skills nor the necessary background experiences to be able to help their children. Many are illiterate and have had very negative school experiences. They see neither the necessity nor the value of helping their children. Academics are not a priority, certainly not an immediate priority.

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* Note: For reasons of confidentiality, the actual names of schools and students involved in the study have not been used.

The research reviewed confirmed our beliefs. Regardless of parents' literacy levels and past school experiences, they are key players in the field of literacy. Parents need to become involved and need to begin valuing education, particularly reading skills.

Henderson's research was particularly relevant for us. Thirty-five studies clearly showed the high correlation between parental involvement and student achievement. Henderson's conclusion, that any degree of parent involvement was valuable, was very important. Given the generally non-existent level of parental involvement at present, expectations would have to be realistic. Parents could not be expected to suddenly turn out in great numbers nor know immediately how to help their children.

In program planning for the Literacy Project, "Reading Aloud" was certainly deemed an important strategy. The review of the literature reconfirmed this belief to an even greater degree, especially reading aloud to children.

Reading aloud to students is often considered more primary in nature, but for inner city students, the benefits of reading aloud continue to be very valuable for two reasons. One, few inner city parents or caregivers take time to read aloud to their children, if indeed they have the necessary reading skills. Second, large amounts of information can be given to students that is not accessible through independent reading. Reading aloud to students should be a Literacy Project priority, but a strategy that would have to be implemented in the classroom.

The research on reading aloud cannot be refuted. However, it is neither easy, inexpensive, nor rewarding, as Rasinski and Frederick suggest, if parents are illiterate and very poor. The request to parents to read aloud must be made carefully and knowledgeably, if at all, in an inner city community.

Most similar to our proposed Literacy Project, though certainly still quite different, were the Haringey Reading Project and the Belfield Reading Project. These projects involved non-literate and non-English speaking parents, two commonalities with several Community Elementary parents. The two projects in England found that parents in a disadvantaged neighbourhood would become involved. They found minimal gains in reading scores but great attitudinal changes. They conducted home visits regularly and documented their benefits. These studies in particular confirmed our strategies for our Literacy Project.

All the problems common to disadvantaged neighbourhoods exist in the area around Community Elementary: poverty, sexual abuse, physical abuse, prostitution, hunger, unemployment, malnutrition, poor health and illiteracy.

Jim Trelease talks about "tomorrow's parents sitting in today's classrooms". "Tomorrow's parents" are dangerously close in Community Elementary. Teenage parents are not uncommon. If our Literacy Project can impact on some students, and alter some attitudes, literacy may be more attainable and the potential for a brighter future more possible.

THE PROJECT GROUP

The project centred on a Grade Four class at Community Elementary. The profile of this class was as follows:

Cultural Make Up (Based on total number from September - December)

Native	- 20
Non-native	- 8 (two students are from English as a second language homes)
Metis	- 1

Social-Economic Make Up

- 75% of the Grade Four families are on social assistance. Many have been on social assistance for an extended period of time. (Over 2 years)

- 25% of the families are employed in the service industry. (Waitress, bakery, seamstress)

- 65% of students come from single-parent homes. (Usually with the mother)

School Movement

- Since September 1990 -- 4 students have transferred out, 3 students have transferred in.

- Only 2 of the 29 students have been at Community Elementary School for their entire school life.

- Many students change school at least once a year.

- One student has been in 7 schools in the past 18 months.

- A number of students (5-7) arrive 30 minutes to an hour late at least 2 to 4 times a week.

- Attendance class percentage is about 92-94% each month. There are 3 students where lack of attendance is a serious concern.

Achievement Levels

The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests, which are vocabulary and comprehension tests, were administered to the class in September. Scores were not recorded below the 2.4 grade level, although some students would have fallen well below that level.

Students generally scored higher on the comprehension section of the tests. The vocabulary section dealt with identifying words in isolation; this is not something that the students were familiar with.

This test was the first one given in September and a few students experienced a great deal of frustration. Most of the students finished the test in the time allowed and felt good about the experience.

Grade Four achievement scores (based on Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test administered in September 1990) were as follows:
- 20 out of 25 (80%) students scored lower than grade level (4.0)
- 16 out of 25 (64%) students were 6 months to a year below grade level

Grade Four achievement scores (based on CTBS math sections Ml and M2 administered in November 1990) were as follows:
- 13 out of 24 (54%) students scored lower than grade level (4.3)

Informal Observations

At the beginning of the Literacy Project the students were closely observed during silent reading time. The silent reading time lengthened during the course of the four months. The class would read silently every day, usually in the morning.

The class generally took a while to settle down with a book. They frequently left their desks to search for other reading material. Some students found it difficult to stay on task even for a short period of time (10 minutes). It was quite clear that a few students did not like reading and would do other things if they were not being closely monitored.

Many students asked if they could read with a partner; they all seemed to enjoy reading with a partner and discussing the pictures and text. They were allowed to do this after individual reading time.

Student Survey
"Which Face Shows How You Feel"

A survey was made of students' attitudes toward school and personal matters. Students responded to nineteen questions using a three point indicator: happy, neutral or sad faces. (See Appendix A) Nine questions related to school and/or school subjects. Ten questions related to personal and social perceptions.

Data Analysis

The first question, "How I feel about school" was weighed carefully. One student responded negatively. Six students responded neutrally.

Of the other eight questions relating specifically to school subjects, two questions were particularly noted:

"How I feel about reading" and
"How I feel about arithmetic".

Students responding negatively to one of these three responses might be considered at risk at least in that area. Students responding negatively to one response and neutrally to one or two other items were also possibly at risk. Six students fell into the at risk category. Ten students responded neutrally to one or more of these questions.

Responses to the two statements: "How I feel about reading" and "How I feel about books" were compared. Sixteen of 23 responses were the same. One negative response to reading responded neutrally to books. Two neutral responses to reading responded positively to books. Four positive responses to reading responded neutrally to books. The negative response to reading may not be as serious since the child feels neutrally about books. The other six variations may be quite possible to correlate positively.

Students at risk academically

* Negative - to school - one student (neutral to reading and to arithmetic)
* Negative - to reading - one student (negative to arithmetic)
* Negative - to arithmetic - two students (neutral to school and to reading)
Negative - to arithmetic - two students

*most serious

Students to be watched closely

Neutral	- to school	
	- to reading	One student
	- to arithmetic	
Neutral	- to reading	One student
	- to arithmetic	One student
Neutral	- to school	One student
	- to reading	One student
Neutral	- to school	One student
	- to reading	Two students
	- to arithmetic	Two students

Personal Perceptions

Keeping in mind the normal pre-adolescent feelings of self-confidence and perceptions, particular student responses were noted. Subtly and also purposefully negative and neutral feelings were addressed throughout the four month fall term.

> "How the teacher feels about me." One student felt negative feelings and six students felt neutral.
>
> "How I feel about the way I act most of the time." Four students responded negatively and nine students responded neutrally.
>
> "How my family feels about me." Three students responded neutrally.
>
> "How I feel about rules." Four students responded negatively and twelve students responded neutrally.

Students' Personal Growth at Risk

Negative	- perception of teacher feelings	- One student	- neutral	
Negative	- feelings about rules	- One student	- neutral	- teacher - rules
		- Three students	- neutral	- actions
Negative	- feelings about own actions	- Four students		
Neutral	- feelings about family feelings	- Four students		
Neutral	- perception of teacher feelings	- One student		
Neutral	- feelings about own actions	- One student		
	- feelings about rules	- Three students		
Neutral	- feelings about own actions	- One student		
	- feelings about rules	- One student		
Neutral	- feelings about own actions	- One student		
	- feelings about rules	- Three students		

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

A survey of student attitudes to reading was also made (see Appendix B) and is discussed in the section on Post Project Assessment.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The literacy program contained the following elements:

1. High school reading buddies
2. Come read with me
3. Home reading program
4. Family night at the library
5. Special activities
6. Home visits.

Each of these elements is described below.

HIGH SCHOOL READING BUDDIES

As stated previously, Community Elementary students generally live in literacy-impoverished homes. Few register in any high school; fewer graduate.

We approached Neighbourhood High School, some seven blocks away, with a request to pair the Grade Four class with a high school class. The objectives were simple:

1. to provide the grade four students with high school role models and associated values, and

2. to provide listeners and sources for interaction as listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills were developed.

We were very happy with the enthusiastic response we received last June and even more elated with the "Buddy project" as it evolved. It has had immeasurable benefits for both the Grade Four students and the Grade Eleven students. The Grade Fours have treasured their time with a high school buddy and have reaped benefits both socially and academically.

The Grade Elevens, though somewhat apprehensive initially, without exception said they would recommend such a program to other high school students. These comments on a questionnaire speak volumes. Many of the Grade Elevens said the project should be longer, that they were just beginning to get to know their little buddy.

The paired Buddy project was perhaps one of the most exciting of the Literacy strands for the Grade Fours. On Wednesdays, they lined up at the windows waiting and watching, each eager to see the arrival of his/her buddy, each hiding the disappointment when his/her buddy was absent.

The role modelling was an important aspect of this particular program. The Grade Elevens, again without exception, commented on the value to them as well as to the Grade Fours of being the mature model, the capable student, the caring "big buddy".

It was a learning experience for both groups. Neither group was really comfortable with the other in the beginning. The onus really fell on the Grade Elevens to create a comfortable atmosphere. The Grade Fours were eager but simply lacked the skills of relating to a stranger. The Grade Elevens, who truly made an effort to interact and become more acquainted with their younger buddies, were the ones who reaped the greatest satisfaction and highest marks from the program.

Once again, the general background experience of the Grade Fours was a factor and therefore this project was extremely valuable. The buddy program was a safe program for the Grade Fours -- they could, if they "would", establish a genuine relationship of caring. For many Grade Fours, this was a new experience.

Since each meeting had an academic focus, a lot of learning occurred. The Grade Fours had immediate help when they were "stuck" on a word in reading or when they needed help thinking of or spelling a word in writing. The Grade Elevens had to become editors and proofreaders; they had to explain and define. It was a wonderful experience for both groups.

Program Description

Sept. 19 . Host School - Community Elementary
. Ice breaker activity
. Random pairing of students
. Get acquainted by chatting, touring Community Elementary and snack time.

Sept. 26 . Host School - Neighbourhood High School
. Welcome by Neighbourhood High School Vice-Principals
. Presentation of Neighbourhood High School t-shirts to Grade Four students
. Tour of Neighbourhood High School (A collegiate of some 2,000 grade nine to twelve students offering numerous and varied courses, such as

	photography, graphic arts, commercial cooking, gym classes in two gyms, etc.) . Snack time.
Oct. 3	. Host School - Community Elementary . Completed interest inventories . Snack time.
Oct. 9	. Host School - Community Elementary . Guest - author Peter Eyvindson
Oct. 17	. Host School - Neighbourhood High School . Presented decorated "riddle" sheet about high school buddy to high school buddy . Grade Eleven students to make first draft of a booklet about their Grade Four buddy. Activity served as a model for a writing activity for Grade Fours . Snack time.
Oct. 23	. Host School - Community Elementary . Presentation of booklets to Grade Four students . Grade Elevens helped their Grade Four buddies sketch out first draft of a booklet about the Grade Eleven buddy.
Oct. 31	. Host School - Neighbourhood High School . Presentation of booklets authored by Grade Four to Grade Eleven students . Visit to Neighbourhood High School Library - scary story read by Neighbourhood High librarian . Hallowe'en activity - apple bobbing on a string . Hallowe'en chants by grade four students . Lunch together in the Neighbourhood High cafeteria . Specially decorated Hallowe'en cakes.
Nov. 7	. High School cancelled - interviews
Nov. 14	. Indian Legends - paired Grade Four/Grade Eleven reading . Activity - to write a few sentences about a) the beginning b) the middle c) the end
Nov. 21	. Cancelled - Community Elementary interviews

Nov. 28	. Host School - Community Elementary . All students listened to a story - a Native Legend . Grade Fours with their buddies' help write first draft of an original legend . Snack time
Dec. 5	. Host School - Neighbourhood High . Neighbourhood High Computer Lab - typed legends written previous week . Snack time
Dec. 17	. Host School - Community Elementary . Presentation of hard cover picture book written and illustrated by Grade Eleven students to Grade Fours . Snack time . Farewells.

Impact

The high school concept and goal certainly became meaningful to the Grade Fours. That there is a school life after grade eight at Community Elementary became a real phenomenon. The Grade Fours saw the high school experience as desirable because of the very positive influence of the Grade Eleven buddies.

The high school image had an impact on the very impressionable Grade Fours. One native Grade Four buddy saw his native Grade Eleven buddy as "the tallest" in the group. Fashion awareness was evident but a minimal factor. No Grade Four was in absolute awe of his/her buddy. What was more important, and rightly so, was the relationship that developed.

Both Grade Fours and Grade Elevens had varying feelings about the program. For some big and little buddies, it was a relationship that will be remembered for a long time. For others, it was just another experience in life.

The final meeting certainly was the most emotional for everyone. Almost everyone wished it would continue -- the true sign of a successful project.

Opinions of Grade Eleven Buddies

The Grade Eleven students were given an individual evaluation sheet to fill out at the end of the three-month program. The questionnaire appears in Appendix C. Sample responses to each of the questions are listed below.

About Your Buddy

1. Describe your relationship with your buddy.

   Me and my buddy get along really good. At first she was a bit shy but we're friends now.

   My relationship was pretty good. We talked about different things. She never really opened up to me but that's okay.

2. Do you think your Buddy benefited in any way from this program? Explain.

   I think so. When I first met her she seemed really quiet but now I always see her talking a lot and she's not shy around me any more either.

   Yes, they get to see what the older kids are like and how they react with the younger people and this may have rubbed off on them.

How Did You Feel?

1. Initially, how did you feel about being paired with a Grade 4 student?

   At first I didn't know what to expect, because I didn't know if this program would work out.

   I felt she was the little sister I never had.

   Well, at first I didn't like the idea of being with a little kid, but later it became fun. I began to look forward to seeing them.

2. Now, how do you feel about the experience?

   I felt that the program is a good experience and I think that every school should have this program.

   I enjoyed it. It is nice to hear things from a child's point of view.

3. Do you think you benefited in any way from this program? Explain.

   Yes, I learned how to relate with kids more.

   Yes, I met a new friend and enjoyed helping him to become a better reader.

   Yes, because I learned to appreciate other people's situations, and not to prejudge them.

4. Would you consider a Reading Buddy type of school program over again?

   Definitely. I think that it makes both buddies feel better when they help each other.

   Yes, I would be ready and willing to do this again, anytime.

5. What would your recommendations be to another high school student?

   I think all English classes should do this project.

   It's good experience to read and talk to a reading buddy and plan activities and to share ideals.

   If you have the chance grab it.

Frequency

1. Was the weekly interaction appropriate? or too frequent? Why?

   Meeting our buddies once a week is good enough for me.

   Appropriate. It just wasn't too much because it didn't interfere with other stuff we did.

2. Was the length of the project, September 19 to December appropriate? Too long? Too short? Why?

   I might say once every 2 weeks for whole school year so they can look forward to seeing us all year round.

Too short, I wish it could have continued a little longer so I could get closer to my reading buddy.

Appropriate because it wasn't too long.

COME READ WITH ME

Come Read With Me was a program introduced by Miss Graves late in the 1989-90 school year. It was continued during the Literacy Project.

Come Read With Me was an hour long program of reading every Friday morning to which parents were invited. It began with a guest(s) who read a book or told a story of his or her choice. This provided an opportunity for reading to the class -- an activity extremely important as documented in the review of the literature. As well, guest readers provided the Grade Four class with the opportunity to hear many different stories and styles of reading and be exposed to a wide variety of occupations and careers, all of which involve reading.

Following the guest's presentation, the Grade Fours had their chance to read from a chosen familiar book to an adult. The key to the success of this program was the attendance of adults. The Grade Four students loved having their parents come. In fact, there was some pressure on the parents to attend, and for others, pressure to attend regularly. Of the 28 students who registered in the class at the beginning of school and throughout the four months, only ten students had never had a parent attend. Any interested adult was welcome at the Come Read With Me sessions. Three parents of primary students attended regularly. Teacher associates were also regularly scheduled. The Community School Co-ordinator attended regularly. The custodians attended when possible.

The hour ended with a snack the students had prepared -- another learning experience -- reading recipes. The students acquired expertise in brownie and muffin baking as well as reading.

Come Read With Me began September 21. Guests included a liaison worker with the Saskatoon Metis & Friendship Centre, the Principal of Community Elementary School, the Superintendent of Schools of the Saskatoon Board of Education, representatives of the Sherbrook Community Center and the City Police Department, and executive and staff members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. Five players from the Saskatoon Blades attended one Come Read With Me Session.

Come Read With Me ran from September 21 to December 7, twelve Fridays. Two Friday sessions were cancelled because the school was closed. On two Fridays, guests cancelled. On both occasions a Grade Four student volunteered to read to the class and visitors.

Adult attendance varied. Parent attendance was as high as nine and as low as five. Other adults attending, including support personnel, ranged from four to eight.

A pancake breakfast was held to end the program on December 7. Guest readers were the Grade Four students. Each read a legend he/she had written with his/her Grade Eleven Buddy.

Impact on the Grade Four Class

The students benefited by the weekly opportunity to practise their oral reading skills. As important was their gain in self-confidence. The students were quite eager and quite comfortable in reading to any adult.

The students were exposed to varied reading styles and varied stories. The importance of reading was enunciated by all visitors, a reinforcement of regular teacher comments.

The program was a wonderful public relations event for communication between parents and teachers. It was an informal, non-threatening, regular activity in which parents could participate. Five parents attended very regularly and became strong supporters of the program and the school. Many other parents became more comfortable for the first time in the school. Three parents from other classes were regular attenders and were most supportive. The importance of reading was modelled very effectively to teacher associates. It was a program where every participant was "a winner".

HOME READING PROGRAM

It has long been acknowledged that reading at home with your children is the first form of schooling. Children who are encouraged to read at home, preferably with an adult, grow to appreciate written language and often develop into lifelong readers.

Reading at home for many of the Grade Four students did not exist before the Home Reading Program was initiated this fall. During the home visits that were made in September, the majority of parents told us that their children did little to no reading at home in the evening. Many of the parents did little reading themselves.

The Home Reading Program provided the opportunity for students to read with their parents. All students received a log book, which they were asked to take home each night. They were asked to read at least four times a week, 15 to 30 minutes each time with their parents. After reading with their parents, the children filled out the name of the book and the number of minutes read. The parents were then asked to sign the log sheet indicating that their child had read that evening. The parents were invited to make comments about their child's reading.

Incentives were also provided to encourage the students to read at home. After five nights of reading, the students could choose a pencil or eraser. After ten nights, they could choose a pencil or eraser. After fifteen nights, the student could choose a poster. After 25 nights, the student could choose a book.

These incentives, along with the encouragement of their parents, provided the motivation for many of the students to read at home.

A chart was prominently displayed in the room indicating the number of times a student had read at home. Each morning the log books were collected and each student who had read the previous evening received a happy face sticker to put up beside his/her name. This morning ritual became a source of excitement for the whole class.

Every student did make an effort to read at home. Approximately half of the class read every night. The rest of the class read about two to four times a week. There were a couple of students who did very little home reading. After discussing this problem with their parents (Teacher Associate did a home visit), their home reading did increase somewhat. One student who did not receive any encouragement or support at home, came to school early and read with school personnel. Although this was not the ideal situation, the student was motivated enough to ask for help.

Impact on the Grade Four Class

This program was very successful. Students were excited about taking books home and reading them to or with their parents. The incentives provided great motivation for the students. Most of the students do not have any books at home to read. When given the opportunity to choose a book to keep, they could hardly contain their enthusiasm.

It also gave parents an opportunity to spend a few "cosy minutes" with their child. Many parents commented that the Home Reading Program gave them insight into what their child was doing in school. One parent commented that her son made her sit down and listen to him read for two hours one night. Students discussed the books they had read the night before with other students in the class. This did not happen before the Home Reading program.

When asked if they would like to see the Home Reading Program continued after Christmas, every student, with the exception of one, wanted to see the program start on the first day of school in January.

If these students are to become lifelong readers, they must read in their leisure time. The Home Reading Program brought them one step closer to this reality.

FAMILY NIGHT AT THE LIBRARY

The school library was opened to the community Wednesday evenings from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Children had to be accompanied by an adult.

This weekly evening at the library had the following basic objectives:

- to provide an opportunity for parents (caregivers) to read with their children
- to expose parents to the school library, which is quite well stocked and attractive
- to promote reading.

Attendance varied. Almost every Wednesday an attractive reminder was distributed to all students. This reminder on Wednesdays seemed necessary to assure parents the library was open. The first night sixteen adults and twenty children came. On the coldest, windiest nights some six adults and nine children attended. These were usually different people. A very small core were weekly attenders.

Browsing and borrowing were obviously the main activities. In addition there was filmstrip viewing and videos some nights.

One really exciting activity was that of a parent initiating a half-hour story corner where she read to her children and any other interested children.

A request for adult books was made and the community coordinator was able to get 100 or so paperback books that parents could borrow on the honour system. Several adults made very good use of this service.

Regular Family Night at the Library was changed during the week of the Book Fair. Parents were invited to visit the Book Fair. No attendance record was kept but many parents and other community members visited. Some $270.00 worth of books and materials were sold. Shopping in a book store was probably new to many parents. It was obvious many parents had been motivated to attend by their children.

Family Night at the Library concluded November 28th. In addition to the usual activities, a computer was set up to demonstrate various programs that students use. Special guests included the Deputy Director of the Saskatoon Board of Education. A draw was held for a Christmas turkey and a magazine. Sixteen adults and 21 children attended this final night.

Impact

The importance of reading was demonstrated simply by the commitment of the Literacy team to open the library one evening a week. Many different parents saw the library for the first time. More children read and many children read much more than they had been reading. The adult books provided reading material for adults.

Subjectively, it did seem like an event that truly did promote reading.

SPECIAL EVENT:
VISIT OF PETER EYVINDSON, SASKATCHEWAN AUTHOR

Peter Eyvindson, Saskatchewan author, was invited to Community Elementary, through the Literacy Project. The opportunity to hear an author read his/her books is usually an experience that truly makes print "come alive". It was suspected that few Community Elementary students would ever have heard an author, nor would they be likely to hear an author.

Mr. Eyvindson, former teacher and librarian, has written several books. Mr. Eyvindson had four sessions throughout the day. This allowed for similar age grouping. The exception was the Grade Four class, who invited their Grade Eleven Buddies.

Mr. Eyvindson described the way in which his books were created. His three sons provided the stimulation for some story lines. In other cases his sons provided some ideas. Mr Eyvindson told of the long long route, some thirteen years, to get one of his books to press. He attempted various formats and experienced many disappointments. A sudden inspiration to use prose resulted in a recent book, A Crow Named Joe.

Mr. Eyvindson showed the students the lay-out of pictures and print that will appear in his next book.

Mr. Eyvindson rounded out his presentation by reciting humorous poems and involving the students in a song about "Auntie Monica".

Impact on the Grade Four Class

The Grade Four class had read or listened to Peter Eyvindson's stories. They were familiar with his background and his family. They were quite familiar with his picture on the book jackets, as well as with the illustrations.

Seeing and listening to Peter Eyvindson certainly had some impact on their knowledge of authors and a writing career. It is very difficult to measure such impact. Perhaps as older students or adults they will be able to verbalize the impact Peter Eyvindson had. While the visit was treated mostly as entertainment, the author visit, along with the many discussions of books and stories, certainly has resulted in more mature discussions and critiques of new stories introduced and studied.

SPECIAL EVENT:
THE GREAT CANADIAN (SCHOLASTIC) BOOK FAIR

The Scholastic Distributor in Saskatoon invited the Community Elementary staff to a 50% off book sale in June, 1990. Since the Literacy Project grant had been awarded by that time we were able to purchase $600 worth of books (a saving of $300) to establish a beginning class library.

Along with this invitation to the Book Sale came an invitation to host a Book Fair. As part of the Literacy Project, this opportunity was quickly seized.

Our goal was relatively simple. We wanted to expose the student body to many new books; to provide the opportunity to touch, feel, and browse through new books, and also to encourage the purchase of books rather than chips, coke, or trinkets.

We did schedule the Book Fair at the end of the month to coincide with welfare cheques but we did not really expect sales to be brisk. The only date still available that seemed suitable was during the week of Hallowe'en. This seemed to complicate activities for the teachers but had little complicating implications for the students.

Individual classes were invited to visit the Book Fair at scheduled times to browse only. At that time they were given order forms to record the names and prices of books they would like to purchase. The Book Fair was then open for sales at specific times throughout the week.

The younger children were simply drawn to the books like "bees to nectar". They could not wait to handle the books. The older students were also keen but withheld their emotions. Discussions about appropriate book handling had been suggested to each teacher. The students responded. No books were damaged or mistreated.

The Grade Four class had each "won" a purchase of their choice at the Book Fair by completing a class reading activity. This was possible only through the Literacy Project. Their more mature reading habits became noticeable as they were drawn to "chapter books". They were noticeably wise shoppers, choosing a "Valu-Pak", a collection of books, rather than a single book.

Book sales were simply astounding. Students were obviously asking and badgering their parents or caregivers for money to spend at the Book Fair. Students, with paper routes, came with considerable amounts of money to buy books, some for gifts. Parents, who had probably not purchased many books before, for gifts or otherwise, were caught up in the aura of the Book Fair. The Book Fair was open one evening. Parents came in being pulled by a small hand, and directed straight to the book of his/her choosing.

In all some $1,100.00 worth of books and materials were sold. The Scholastic Book Company offer great commissions. The commission was taken in books and materials and will allow for reading incentives to be continued for the remainder of the year. As well, the commission allowed the purchase of books for a Christmas gift for each Grade Four student.

Impact on the Grade Four class

The Grade Four class certainly experienced the same thrill as other students -- that of shopping in a "book store". In addition they had the benefits of being recipients; each student had a free choice of a purchase, at the time of the Book Fair, and received a Valu-Pak of books at Christmas. They received "The Gift of Reading", a gift they seemed to treasure.

SPECIAL EVENT: VISIT TO THE SCHOOL BOARD COMPUTER RESOURCE CENTRE

Community Elementary became a computer project school in September 1990. As such, each classroom had a computer and access to others throughout the school. The Grade Fours enjoyed several computer learning games and programs.

One program they used was FrEd writer, a word processor program. Each student had his/her own disk and had individual experiences writing on the computer.

To enable a whole class computer writing activity, we visited the Computer Resource Centre at the School Board offices. Each Grade Four student was given at least 2 photographs taken during the Literacy Project. On the computer they all wrote individual comments about the activity shown in the photograph. The story was then printed out.

The benefits were two-fold:

1. The students practised their writing skills; and
2. they each became more computer literate.

Impact

The importance of writing in developing literacy skills has been emphasized all term. This was an occasion when writing was made exciting on a computer. Errors were easily corrected, changes easily made, and legible stories were the end result for everyone. Certainly, computer knowledge is important for the future, especially meaningful use of the computer.

HOME VISITS

The home visitations done in September and December were an integral part of the Literacy Project. Research has shown that visiting parents on their "own turf" is much less intimidating than in a school setting. Many of the parents in Community Elementary have had minimal contact with the school. In general the contact that the parents have had throughout their lives with schools have not been positive. Many native parents went to residential schools or dropped out in high school.

Home visits by teachers were unique to Community Elementary School. Some teachers had made home visits but this was usually due to an isolated school related problem. Mrs. Richert made home visits with a native teacher associate, and Miss Graves made home visits with a Metis teacher associate.

The intent of the home visit was three-fold:

- a very informal visit with parents/caregivers to get to know them on a more personal level (we felt it was very important for us to get to know the parent as well as the parent getting to know us)
- discuss the Literacy Project with them with particular emphasis on the home reading program
- to record parents' impressions of their children's reading habits, attitudes and abilities.

The initial visits took place in the second week in September. A letter was sent home to the parents informing them of the visit and why we were doing the home visits. Most of the parents were at home when we came to visit. Two parents requested the visit to be at the school.

The reception that we received was warm and inviting for the most part. In a few cases we felt that the parent may have been a little suspicious of why we were taking the time to come to their home and visit with them. After a few minutes in the home, the nervousness and apprehension seemed to disappear. As a thank-you for having us in their homes, we gave each family a mini Robert Munsch book.

Questionnaires which guided parent interviews before and after the project appear in Appendix D.

September Visit Impressions

- parents were nervous
- commented on the fact that teachers usually do not come out and visit
- about half of the homes had preschool-aged children at home
- most homes had little to no books in evidence

- most parents seemed genuinely concerned about their children's activities at school
- would support the literacy project.

The final visits took place in the third week in December. The reception we received was terrific. The rapport between parents and school staff was very positive. The visits took on more of a social atmosphere. The two parents who came to the school in September invited us to their homes in December.

December Visit Impressions

- parents were more comfortable with school staff
- responded positively about the Literacy Project
- commented that they knew more about what was going on in the school
- felt their child benefited from the Literacy Project
- wanted the Literacy Project to continue
- enjoyed the home visit.

As a result of these home visits we felt:

- communication between home and school improved
- relationship between home and school improved
- parents became more aware of school activities (and in some cases actively involved)
- teachers became aware of the "whole" child.

POST PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Test Results

Lenore Coad, the Resource Room Teacher at Community Elementary, provided the following description of pre- and post-project results of tests administered to the Grade Four students:

> As the resource room teacher, my role in the Grade Four Literacy Project has been to administer informal reading inventories and the reading section of the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) to each child individually, and to assist in some standardized testing in the classroom.

> I have observed that the students have become more comfortable in testing situations as time went on, partly due to the frequency with which tests were given. As well, the teachers have tried to make the children feel as relaxed as possible during evaluations, thus reducing their levels of anxiety.
>
> The Bader Reading and Language Inventory and the reading section of the WRAT were first administered in September and early October, and again in mid-December. This is very little time for observable improvements in reading achievement to occur. Despite the shortness of time, most of the students did make measurable gains, both in the WRAT and in the reading inventory. Most students attacked the task with positive attitudes.
>
> Almost all the students improved their reading levels in the informal reading inventory (IRI). Although there is an element of subjectivity in using an IRI as a testing tool, even though alternate passages from the same reading inventory were used, some definitive statements can be made:
>
> 1. Students were very willing to read the stories and try to retell them.
>
> 2. There was an overall noticeable improvement since September in the order and number of their story memories.
>
> 3. Most students made self-corrections of mispronounced words, and re-read phrases, as they tried to read for meaning.
>
> 4. Most students tried to answer the interpretive questions with logical answers, based on their interpretations of the stories, and their personal experiences.
>
> From my viewpoint, the students of this Grade Four class, in general, have made remarkable progress in their reading ability in a very short period of time.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 record student test scores for September and December on the Bader Reading and Language Inventory, the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests.

Table 1. September and December Scores on the Bader Reading and Language Inventory

Student	September Score	December Score	Difference
1	3.5	5.0	+1.5
2	2.0	4.0	+2.0
3	4.5	5.0	+.5
4	4.0	4.5	+.5
5	1.5	2.0	+.5
6	4.0	4.0	0
7	2.0	3.5	+1.5
8	4.5	5.0	+.5
9	4.5	5.0	+.5
10	4.0	5.0	+1.0
11	3.0	transferred	
12	2.0	2.0	0
13	3.5	4.5	+1.0
14	4.0	transferred	
15	4.0	4.5	+.5
16	4.0	5.0	+1.0
17	2.5	3.0	+.5
18	4.0	4.5	+.5
19	2.0	transferred	
20	4.0	3.5	-.5
21	2.5	3.5	+1.0
22	3.0	3.0	0
23	2.5	absent	
24	3.5	3.5	0
25	4.0	3.5	-.5
26	1.0	1.0	0
Class Average	3.1	3.8	
Highest Score	4.5	5.0	
Lowest Score	1.0	1.0	

Table 2. September and December Scores on the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT)

Student	September Score	December Score	Difference
1	2.7	3.2	+.5
2	2.5	2.6	+.1
3	5.4	5.3	-.1
4	7.0	8.2	+1.2
5	absent	1.5	
6	absent	2.6	
7	absent	2.7	
8	5.4	5.8	+.4
9	3.8	4.2	+.4
10	absent	2.7	
11	transferred		
12	2.0	2.3	+.3
13	2.6	3.4	+.8
14	transferred		
15	4.0	4.4	+.4
16	4.5	5.2	+.7
17	2.7	3.6	+.9
18	absent	2.6	
19	2.0	transferred	
20	3.5	4.2	+.7
21	2.6	2.6	0
22	2.5	2.6	+.1
23	2.5	absent	
24	2.4	2.5	+.1
25	4.6	5.4	+.8
26	2.0	2.0	0
Class Average	3.4	3.7	
Highest Score	7.0	8.2	
Lowest Score	2.0	1.5	

Table 3. September and December Scores on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests

Student	September Score	December Score	Difference
1	3.5	3.4	-.1
2	*	2.6	+.2
3	4.1	absent	
4	5.7	6.3	+.6
5	*	absent	
6	3.2	4.0	+.8
7	*	absent	
8	7.5	7.2	-.3
9	4.6	4.3	-.3
10	2.8	3.6	+.8
11	2.5	transferred	
12	*	*	
13	2.5	3.6	+1.1
14	4.2	transferred	
15	3.6	3.5	-.1
16	2.7	3.6	+.9
17	3.3	2.5	-.8
18	3.0	3.4	+.4
19	2.0	transferred	
20	2.7	3.3	+.6
21	2.8	*	-.4
22	2.4	2.4	0
23			
24	2.4	2.8	+.4
25	3.9	4.2	+.3
26			
Class Average	3.4	3.7	
Highest Score	7.5	7.2	
Lowest Score	2.4	2.4	

* scored too low for a measurement

The Gates-MacGinitie test results reflect an overall class improvement. The class scored better on the comprehension than the vocabulary section of the tests.

Some students scored lower on this test than in the previous one given in September. Many factors could account for this; students were excited about Christmas holidays, some were restless with the bitterly cold weather that was upon us and some were just plain "tired" of taking tests. All of the students had been through an intense four months.

The attitude towards taking the test seemed much more relaxed in December. It was just one of the many they had done before. Their confidence level could have accounted for this relaxed manner as well. They were familiar with the test expectations.

Informal Observations

During the four-month project, the students were immersed in reading. They were used to the routine of silent reading. They settled down much faster than in September and even the reluctant readers looked forward to their time with a book. Students would rush to the classroom library to search for a favourite book or dig through their desks to find an unfinished story. More students were reading chapter books.

There was a definite change in attitude toward reading in the four months of the project. Most students came to realize that reading could be fun and interesting and that yes, you could learn something too.

D.E.A.R. (drop everything and read) became a treasured time for the students. They even seemed to enjoy partner reading more than ever. A chance to discuss a book with a classmate was a chance to "show their stuff" and they never missed an opportunity!

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

The ERAS was first given to the Grade Four class on September 14 (See Appendix B). The class was prepared for the survey by doing two survey/inventory types of questionnaires using pictorial formats.

The original class score was quite acceptable -- within the 60th percentile. Those students who scored low on the attitude survey were noted. There was not a strong correlation between attitude and expected ability.

The ERAS was given again on December 10. The overall class score remained the same. Following is a more complete analysis and discussion.

Table 4. Data Analysis of the Elementary
Reading Attitude Survey
(20 comparisons)

I-A. A stronger attitude toward reading for fun than for academic purposes.

At school beginning - 8/20
At mid year - 6/20

B. No noticeable attitude difference between recreational reading and academic reading.

At school beginning - 12/20
At mid year - 12/20

C. A stronger attitude toward academic reading than for recreational reading.

At school beginning - 0/20
At mid year - 2/20

II-A. Difference between attitude and ability
(good/near positive attitude - low ability)

75/80
96/54

B. Strong disinclination to read (ability but poor attitude)

Below 50th percentile
Below 40th percentile
Below 30th percentile
Below 20th percentile

III. Total Score Significant Difference (7 or 8 points)

Improved Attitude	No Significant Difference	Deteriorated Attitude
59/66		75/54
56/63		53/35
52/59		
67/76		
72/80		
57/65		
		53/35
		61/51
44/57		
7 students	9 students	4 students

As may be noted from Table 4, seven students significantly increased their total attitude scores. An improved attitude toward reading among 35% of the stable class body is positive and satisfying.

Less than half of this group showed no significant change in attitude. This would indicate the program and project had neither positive nor negative effects on the students' attitudes.

Of the 9 students showing no significant attitudinal change, 5 students ranged consistently from the 70th to the 99th percentile; 4 students were consistently below the 50th percentile.

Four students' overall attitude score dropped significantly. Three of these students may not have realistically or consciously evaluated their capabilities. As the term progressed these 3 students truly struggled.

The 4th student requires some consideration. Her ability and achievement do not reflect the low attitude score at mid term.

Table 5.
Class Attitude as Illustrated by
the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Positive Attitude Toward Reading	Relatively Indifferent Attitude Toward Reading	Less than Indifferent Attitude Toward Reading

<--------------------------Raw Scores -------------------------------->

	To 50	50	-50
Sept. 14	22 students	01	3 students
Dec. 10	21 students	01	3 students

	51-60	61-80
Sept. 14	12 students	10 students
Dec. 10	10 students	11 students

Class Average - Raw Scores	Percentile
September 14th - 59.88	62
December 10th - 59.5	60

The results of the Reading Attitude Survey reported in Table 5 indicate a slightly better attitude toward reading than that of other Grade Fours across the continent. This is somewhat surprising given the generally conceptualized attitude in community schools. The particular class in the Literacy Project is more stable than most classes. Their stability and generally positive attitude would indicate a correlation.

Further breakdown of the raw scores would indicate an almost even split between a truly positive attitude and a slightly more positive than indifferent attitude. This factor is significant. Unless literacy is carefully nurtured, nearly half of the students could easily become less than indifferent about reading. If nearly half of the students can be encouraged to at least maintain a mild interest in reading, literacy skills will develop.

The stability of the Literacy Project Grade Four Class has been mentioned.

25 students participated in the survey on September 14,
24 students participated in the survey on December 10. (1 student was absent)
4 students have moved away since September 14
4 students participating in December did not participate in September.
For comparison - 20 students.

Observation and Evaluation of the Reading Buddy Project

Arlene Catling, teacher of English at Neighbourhood High School, provided the following comments on the reading buddy part of the project:

> My Grade Eleven English class was involved in the "reading buddy" component of the literacy project developed by Linda Graves and Roberta Richert.
>
> When Neighbourhood High was approached to participate in this project it was decided by the English Department that it would be very applicable to the English 20A course as the themes are Childhood and Youth. Because of my interest in the project, my English 20A class was selected. It should be stressed that the Grade Eleven students were not hand-picked but were regular stream students with varying levels of academic ability.
>
> The Grade Eleven students met with the Grade Four class from Community Elementary School over the course of four months from September to December. Most often my students travelled to Community Elementary and on several occasions Miss Graves' class came to Neighbourhood High for a variety of learning-related activities.
>
> The reading buddy project became the focus of my English 20A class for the full semester and all literature dealing with

childhood was related, where applicable, to the high school students' experiences with their reading partner.

Of the 25 students in the English 20A class, only a few were initially enthusiastic about the project. The majority were apathetic and some had serious reservations about the whole concept. However, as the project got underway, the increased enthusiasm that was generated grew noticeably from day to day. When one of the sessions had to be cancelled due to parent-teacher interviews, my students were all disappointed that they would not see their "buddies" that week.

All of my Grade Eleven students gained a heightened awareness and appreciation of the abilities, interests, and personalities of younger children. I also noticed a heightened sense of responsibility develop in a majority of my students and they became protective older brothers and sisters to the younger students and in some circumstances took on a parental role. This heightened sense of responsibility was also evident in their readiness to volunteer their time and effort to prepare for a visit to Neighbourhood High by the Community Elementary students. They made snacks the evening before and even the boys volunteered to bake cookies. As well, the Grade Eleven students willingly gave up their recesses to travel to Community Elementary School, some students walking the eight blocks in temperatures below -20 degrees C. They also gave up several of their noon hours to participate in special occasions with the Community Elementary students. When Miss Graves' class was coming to Neighbourhood High, the Grade Elevens sacrificed their recess to greet them at the door when they arrived.

Attendance on reading buddy days was near perfect and it also increased significantly on other days as the semester progressed. The improvement in attendance was indicative of the increased interest and heightened sense of responsibility generated by the project.

Class participation was good and many creative ideas were generated when we planned activities for the Community Elementary students. In the English period on the day following the meetings with the Community Elementary students, the Grade Eleven students were anxious to share their experiences with the rest of the class. They shared funny stories about what the buddy had said or done and the abilities and interests of their partner in Grade Four.

The Grade Eleven students often applied what they experienced with their reading buddy to other aspects of the English 20A course such as the study of the novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*. They were better able to appreciate Harper Lee's ability to capture the speech and patterns, abilities and interests of the children portrayed in her novel. The literature and the composition skills became more relevant for the Grade Eleven students because of their practical experiences.

Several of my students developed their leadership abilities and became the motivating forces behind several projects. A spirit of co-operation and teamwork grew significantly throughout the course of the semester as well.

Many Grade Eleven parents remarked that they were very impressed with the project and at their son or daughter's participation. One parent in particular remarked that her son talked often of his reading buddy and that she was amazed at the bond that had developed between them and the calibre of the story her son was writing.

One of the major assignments that I gave the Grade Elevens was to write and illustrate a children's book which was to be presented to their reading buddy at the completion of the project. By the time that the assignment was given they each knew their reading buddy quite well and they had to write the book for their individual reading buddy taking their interests and reading level into account. This was an extremely successful assignment as rather than write to a hypothetical audience their audience was "real" and immediate. The elements of creative writing became practical and they were eager to learn them as they were able to see the results and to determine and witness their buddy's reaction.

They were given some class time but much of the work writing and illustrating their books was done at home. The end product was a hard covered book that each Grade Eleven student took great pride in and was eager to share. The pride and accomplishment was evident the day that they presented them to the Grade Four class and the enjoyment they received when the Grade Four buddies read their books to their Grade Eleven partners.

The calibre of the books produced was excellent. The books were individually evaluated and several students received 100%. There was no mark lower than 75% and most ranged between 85% and 95%.

As a result of an article that appeared in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* on December 18th, which described the project and the presentation of the story books, Mr. Hugh Locke, the director of the Youth Ambassador Program at the United Nations, contacted me by telephone and expressed an interest in meeting with me during the Christmas holidays when he would be in Saskatoon. I met with him on January 1st. He was able to see the books produced by the Grade Eleven students. He has taken a representative sampling (five of the books) with him back to New York. The outcomes of the meeting with Mr. Locke are that one of my students, and his reading buddy, are being considered by the U.N. as Youth Ambassadors to the United Nations. As a part of their role as Youth Ambassadors, they would be involved in promoting a publication on Literacy about to be published by the U.N. in celebration of International Literacy Year. It would entail a trip to Ottawa and the U.N. in New York to meet with foreign ambassadors all over the world. Another possibility is that some of the stories may be published through the U.N.

The interest expressed by the United Nations is an outcome of the Reading Buddy Program that was certainly not expected, but is indicative of the success of the project.

The benefits accrued by all the students go far beyond what can be statistically evaluated. The Grade Eleven students benefited from this program as much as did the Grade Fours. It has been a truly worthwhile project and I have enjoyed my participation in it.

Literacy Project Committee Meetings

The word "meetings" is included in the title because the meetings were the prime function of the committee. The committee consisted of project leader, Linda Graves; project team member, Roberta Richert; a parent; and the Metis teacher associate. Other parents and other professionals were invited but for various reasons were unable to become involved.

The original purpose envisoned for the committee was to involve the school community in the Literacy Project and perhaps even take some ownership. This did occur to some extent over the three-month time period, but on a more informal basis than through the actual committee. Individual time restraints, limited interest and commitment to the unknown (the Project), and perhaps unrealistic Project goals altered the function of the committee somewhat.

The Literacy Project was directed by the two professionals. The Committee served as a forum for discussion about the project -- either analyzing what had occurred, or discussing events forthcoming. It was considered important to get parental feedback throughout the Project. The parent member of the Committee enabled some feedback. The teacher associate enabled us to get that much needed reaction from the Metis/Native element.

The Committee met at a scheduled time four times. Since the parent member was in the school frequently much informal sharing occurred. Similarly informal sharing occurred with the teacher associate on an ongoing basis.

The Community School Co-ordinator attended only the initial meeting in June. However, she attended every Family Night at the library Wednesday evenings and most Friday morning Come Read with Me sessions. As well, she was continually updated informally, and in turn shared observations with the Project team.

The Committee brought "community" credibility to the Project. The parent member was very positive throughout the Project, making several valuable suggestions and always bringing a parental perspective. She became a Project diplomat chatting with other parents. The teacher associate explained the Project to many Native families who were previously uninvolved with the school. She brought a sense of trust and understanding to Native families during home visits and especially so to those families who were quite uninvolved in the beginning.

The Committee demonstrated the value and importance of getting community members involved in the education of the children. The difficulty in doing so was also proven.

CONCLUSION

Promoting Reading, A Caring Partnership Approach became a reality in the Grade Four classroom during the fall of 1990. Today's parents and tomorrow's parents came together to make literacy more attainable and the potential for a brighter future more possible.

Engaging parents in the struggle to achieve universal literacy may be one of the most difficult challenges we face as educators, yet it may be the most rewarding for our students, for their parents and for us.

Although three months is a very brief period of time to make wide sweeping attitudinal changes, the seeds were sown. In that short period of time we saw very clear evidence of growth.

More parents became involved in their child's education. They began to realize that indeed education is a partnership between home and school. The parents felt valued and that they had ownership in the project.

We saw reluctant readers become eager readers and established readers become more firmly entrenched in the enjoyment and value of print. We saw a very special group of Grade Four students getting "hooked on books" and selling the idea to other students in the school. We saw students discussing books with their parents. We saw the enjoyment that many students received from reading books. The students felt valued and that they had ownership in the project.

We saw the entire school community supporting the Literacy Project. Other teachers picked up some of the ideas from the Literacy Project and began to use them in their classrooms.

The battles that these families have to face everyday are great. The battle for literacy is perhaps the greatest. It is a battle that all of us, because of the Literacy Project, are much better able to fight.

Appendix A
Survey of Student Attitudes

Which face shows how you feel?

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about school.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about my teacher.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about reading.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about arithmetic.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about art.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about making friends.

☹ 😐 ☺
How other kids feel about me.

☹ 😐 ☺
How the teacher feels about me.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about rules.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about gym.

☹ 😐 ☺
How my family feels about me.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about books.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about science class.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about social studies.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about music.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about the bus driver.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about the principal.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about my classroom.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about leaving this classroom.

☹ 😐 ☺
How I feel about the way I act
most of the time.

Appendix B
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School ____________________ Grade ______________ Name ________________

1.	How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?	8.	How do you feel about reading instead of playing?
2.	How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?	9.	How do you feel about going to a bookstore?
3.	How do you feel about reading for fun at home?	10.	How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?
4.	How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	11.	How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?
5.	How do you feel about spending free time reading?	12.	How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?
6.	How do you feel about starting a new book?	13.	How do you feel about reading in school?
7.	How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?	14.	How do you feel about reading your school books?

15. How do you feel about learning from a book?	18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?
16. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?	19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?
17. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?	20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?

ELEMENTARY READING ATTITUDE SURVEY
SCORING SHEET

Student Name ____

Teacher ____

Grade ____________________ Admission date ______________

	Scoring guide
4 points	Happy
3 points	Slightly smiling
2 points	Mildly upset
1 point	Very upset

Recreational reading	Academic reading
1. ______	11. ______
2. ______	12. ______
3. ______	13. ______
4. ______	14. ______
5. ______	15. ______
6. ______	16. ______
7. ______	17. ______
8. ______	18. ______
9. ______	19. ______
10. ______	20. ______
Raw score: ____	Raw score: ______

Percentile ranks

Recreational ☐

Academic ☐

Full scale ☐

Full scale raw score (Recreational + Academic): ______

Appendix C
Questionnaire on Reading Buddies Program

To Our Grade Eleven Reading Buddies:

As you know, the pairing up of an elementary class with a secondary class is a new experience. We would like your thoughts and feelings on this experience. Your comments may determine whether or not a similar pairing is done another time. Your comments will also be very valuable when writing the final report for the Literacy Project.

Regardless of the comment, positive or less supportive, it will be treated anonymously in the report. Your signature would, however, be helpful in understanding your particular comments. Please feel free to sign your name, or not, as you choose.

Grade Four - Grade Eleven Reading Buddy Project

About Your Buddy

1. Describe your relationship with your Buddy.
2. Do you think your Buddy benefited in any way from this program? Explain.

How did you feel?

1. Initially, how did you feel about being paired with a Grade Four student?
2. Now, how do you feel about the experience?
3. Do you think you benefited in any way from this program? Explain.
4. Would you consider a Reading Buddy type of school program ever again?
5. What would your recommendations be to another high school student?

Frequency

1. Was the weekly interaction appropriate? or too frequent? Why?

Length of Project

1. Was the length of the project, September 19 to December 17
   appropriate?
   too long?
   too short?
   Why?

Appendix D

1. Parent Questionnaire Regarding Child's Reading

(Prior to Project)

Hi. We want to ask you some questions about your child's reading.

Do you enjoy reading yourself?

1. How has ________________ done generally in school in the past?

2. Does _______________ like school? Any subjects particularly?

3. Does ______________ like to read at home? Is there a place and time to do so?

4. What kind of books does ________________ read?
(e.g. adventure stories, mysteries, comics, etc.)

5. What activities does __________________ take part in after school?

6. Does ___________________ like to watch television?

   Regularly? For how long?

7. Does _______________ bring books home from the school library?

   Does _______________ get books from any other place?
   (e.g. mobile library, book store, 2nd hand books, etc.)

8. Do you get the newspaper?

   (If no) Would you like to get it?

   (If yes) Does ______________ read any parts of the newspaper?

9. Do you read with _______________, either books _____________
brings home or any other books?

10. Does _____________ speak another language at home?

11. Does ______________ have any health problems?

    Seeing problems?
    Hearing problems?

12. Any other comments made by parent:

13. Any other observations made by interviewer:
(e.g. preschoolers at home, grandparents living with family, etc.)

2. Parent Questionnaire Regarding Child's Reading

(After Project)

1. How has your child enjoyed the Literacy Project?

2. Have you found that your child is reading more at home?

3. Do you discuss the books your child reads to you?

4. What parts of the Literacy Project did your child enjoy the most?

5. Would you like to see this type of program continue?

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A HOME READING PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Patricia Gudlaugson
Judith Ross-McClacherty
Christina Schut

A large proportion of the population at our school consists of families whose cultural attitude toward school is that of supportive non-involvement; that is, they tend to support the school by expecting their children to meet the expectations of the school program, but they do not involve themselves in their children's school activities.

As a staff, we have been searching for ways to involve parents more directly in their children's learning. At the same time, we have wanted to make our parents feel more comfortable within the formal school setting, by building bridges between their culture and the school culture. To this end, the researchers considered it important to support parents in their understanding that language activities in their first language had a valid and necessary place in the development of oracy and literacy in their children.

Our project -- a home reading program in which language activities in both the family's first language and/or Engish were encouraged -- was one way the researchers felt we might address this need.

THE PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

We set out to determine the effects of a Home Reading Program on parental and student attitudes toward reading. We were interested in finding out whether a Home Reading Program designed specifically for families for whom English is a second language would result in changes in attitudes toward reading, either in the first language or in English.

Our study also included an investigation of the difference in reading growth between students with limited English proficiency whose parents participated in the Home Reading Program, and a similar group of students whose parents were not involved in the Home Reading Program.

THE SPECIFIC TOPICS ADDRESSED

Our study included the following topics:

(a) Attitudes of parents of ESL students toward participation in and support of school reading and language programs

(b) A comparison of reading growth of students involved in a home reading program and the reading growth of students receiving only the regular school program

(c) Literacy events in which parents involve themselves at home

(d) Student attitudes toward reading.

THE SCHOOL, THE STUDENTS, THE RESEARCHERS

Our school is a large urban elementary school (K-Grade 7) with a population of approximately 540 students. The student body is predominantly Asian- and Indo-Canadian with most children being either newly immigrated or first generation Canadians.

Many of the children live in two-parent extended families with both parents working and a grandparent being the major care-giver for the children. Whereas the parents may have better English skills, the grandparents generally speak minimal or no English and interactions between grandparents, parents and grandchildren are in the first language. Because of the large minority populations in the city, it is possible for parents and grandparents to function without acquiring English language skills. Thus, many of the students enrol in kindergarten with little exposure to English and few English skills.

The support services of the school consist of:

(a) district English as a Second Language Reception class for newly arrived immigrant children over the age of nine;

(b) a full-time English Language Centre, of which .5 is District funded and the remaining .5 comes from the school's Special Needs allotment;

(c) a full-time intermediate Learning Assistance Centre

(d) a full-time Primary Learning Assistance Centre and,

(e) a full-day Kindergarten program to meet the needs of the five-year olds who begin their schooling with minimal or no English.

The staff feel that the present programs do not adequately meet the needs for English language acquisition and has petitioned the School Board for additional English language support services.

The students in the research project are from the two Grade Two classrooms in the school. The students were selected using the following criteria:

(a) they are children for whom English is a second language

(b) they were not receiving assistance from the Learning Assistance Centre

(c) they might be receiving additional English language assistance from the English Language Centre

(d) all families included in the study use their first language predominantly at home; some of the parents and grandparents might be illiterate; many read only in their first language

(e) parents agreed to participate in the project. (A multicultural home-school worker initially contacted parents by telephone and explained the program to them in their own language.)

Originally five students were selected from each class for the experimental and control groups respectively, thus giving us ten students from each class for a total of twenty. One of the students in the experimental group moved away and did not continue with the project. Another child in the control group was deleted from the data, when closer examination of her background revealed that she did not meet the criteria. This left us with eighteen students, nine in the experimental group and nine in the control group.

The researchers are three experienced teachers with a keen interest in supporting young beginning readers. Two are the enrolling Grade Two teachers from whose classes the children were selected. The third teacher is the non-enrolling primary learning assistant teacher.

The non-enrolling teacher monitored the home reading program on a weekly basis. This gave the enrolling teachers a degree of objectivity about and some distance from the home reading program, allowing them to concentrate on literacy development for their entire class.

The researchers made extensive use of a multcultural home-school worker, a member of one of the ethnic groups represented in the study, who could communicate with parents in their own languages. Parents were able to contact the home-school worker if they had questions or problems in the program. This contributed significantly to the comfort level of the parents in their participation in the program.

THE PROCEDURES

Parents and children were asked to spend no less (but not much more) than 15 minutes in some reading or listening activity every day for a minimum of 4 times per week.

Three methods of dealing with books or stories were outlined to parents and parents were asked to specify in a reading log which of the methods they used each time:

1. *Parents tell stories.*

   We had noticed that many families have an oral tradition of storytelling. We therefore put this forward as a valid activity to record in the reading log. When this activity occurred in the first language, teachers encouraged children to find a way to tell this story in English, in print, as part of the school program. When a booklet was made about the story in the student's own words, it could be recorded as a "book" in the reading record.

2. *Parents read to children.*

   The local public libraries have heritage language collections. We encouraged children to choose these books as well as books written in English to take home for their parents to read to them. At school, the child could record the book in his/her Reading Record book.

3. *Children read to parents.*

   Children took home books in English to read to their parents. When this was the activity, parents were asked to listen to the story as read in English, and to discuss the story with the child. It was emphasized that this discussion could take place in English or in the first language.

We explained to parents that our main interest was that at least four times per week children were involved in some reading/language activity at home with one or both of their parents. The reading log indicated which of the three activities parents found the most comfortable, or perhaps thought was the most important to use and used with greatest frequency. Parents were encouraged to phone the home-school worker whenever they had questions so that we were able to adjust and provide advice as we went along.

In both classrooms, reading records of books read were kept by all children in the class. Half-lined notebooks were provided to the children for this purpose.

Parent Meetings

An initial workshop for parents was held on September 28, 1990. The multicultural home-school worker provided translation for the presentation wherein the researchers outlined the program and explained the three suggested reading/language activities that could be used and recorded. It was stressed to parents that the reading and activities should be enjoyable for all involved. Appropriate materials for beginning readers were displayed and discussed. At this meeting, with the help of the home-school worker, the initial parent survey was completed.

A second meeting with parents was held November 1, 1990. The purpose of this meeting was to answer any questions that parents might have, and to give parents some ways of sharing a book with their child. Simple techniques were demonstrated by role playing, with two teachers acting as parent and child and the multicultural home-school worker translating for both. Techniques such as questioning about pictures in books, relating material to children's experience and questioning after reading to develop story retelling were demonstrated. Parents were encouraged to substitute their own words for names and words they could not read when they were sharing English language materials with their child. Books, which had been developed from oral stories told at home by parents to their children, were shared with the parents. The value of first language use as a necessary step in learning to speak and read English was emphasized. Parents were reassured that storytelling about the family's past or traditional stories passed down were valid literacy events. A selection of first language books was displayed, and information about obtaining these was shared with the parents. Parents were also encouraged to use the public library regularly.

The final meeting with parents was held December 5, 1990. At this meeting the parents were thanked for their participation, asked for their general impressions of the home reading program and the survey was redone.

The activities for the project were completed December 12, 1990 when the children handed in their reading logs to the non-enrolling teacher.

THE METHODS USED TO COLLECT THE DATA

A Woodcock Reading Mastery Test was administered by the non-enrolling teacher to the children in the control and experimental groups at the beginning and at the end of the project to determine differences in growth of reading achievement. The results of the reading comprehension cluster, (subtests 5 & 6) were used to measure reading growth.

Children's attitudes towards reading were surveyed by the classroom teachers at the beginning and again at the end of the project. The initial survey was carried out September 18, and the final one was completed December 14. All children in both classrooms completed the surveys. Students responded to survey questions by drawing pictures and completing oral cloze questions. Responses were then grouped.

Parent attitudes towards reading were surveyed through the use of a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the project. A survey was conducted on September 28, 1990 and the same survey with one additional question was conducted on December 5, 1990.

Parents and children were asked to keep a reading log in which they recorded which of the three recommended activities they had carried out, the time spent on the activity, and the number of times per week the activities had taken place. The log was pictorial so that its use was not dependent on the ability to read. This Reading log was monitored on a weekly basis. Students received a sticker if they brought their log to the non-enrolling teacher on Wednesdays, after school.

A Reading Record notebook was kept by all students in both classrooms. Reading of self-selected trade books comprises a major component of the reading program in both classrooms. Students recorded the title and author of a book in their Reading Record after they had read the book. The entry was then date-stamped by the classroom teacher when the child had retold the story or read a passage orally to the teacher. Students also received a sticker for the Reading Chart for each validated entry in their Reading Record books. For the project, Reading Record notebooks were used to compare the amount of reading done by children in the control group with the amount of reading done by children in the experimental group.

The classroom teachers encouraged all students in their classes to take home a book each evening. The teachers kept records of the number of books that the children took home over the time span of the project.

THE DATA COLLECTED

Tables 1, 2 and 3 summarize the data collected in this study.

Table 1.
Woodcock Reading Mastery Test
Reading Comprehension Cluster - Grade equivalent scores.

Experimental Group

STUDENT	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER	GROWTH
O	1.3	2.1	8 months
J	K.9	1.5	6 months
M	1.8	2.3	5 months
R	1.9	2.3	4 months
D	1.5	1.9	4 months
J	2.2	2.5	3 months
B	K.8	1.0	2 months
B	2.7	2.9	2 months
N	1.7	1.9	2 months
Reading Growth: Experimental group:		Average: 4 months Range: 2-8 months	

Control Group

STUDENT	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER	GROWTH
J	1.4	2.2	8 months
E	1.9	2.4	5 months
J	K.9	1.3	4 months
J	1.7	2.0	3 months
P	1.4	1.6	2 months
A	3.0	3.2	2 months
A	1.3	1.4	1 month
L	1.9	2.0	1 month
R	K.6	K.6	0 months
Reading Growth: Control Group:		Average: 2.9 months Range: 0-8 months	

Table 2.
Survey of Children's Attitudes Towards Reading and Reading Habits

QUESTION/GROUP	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER	CHANGE
Sources of finding books			
Experimental	17	22	5
Control	12	12	0
Number of places to read			
Experimental	14	22	8
Control	11	15	4
With whom do you like to read?			
Experimental			
Child	5	0	-5
Adult	3	9	6
Other	1	0	-1
Control			
Child	8	4	-4
Adult	0	5	5
Other	1	0	-1
Where do you like to read?			
Experimental			
A personal space	3(bedroom)	8(bedroom)	5
A communal space	1	1	0
Outside	5	0	-5
Control			
A personal space	4	7	3
A communal space	4	1	-3
Outside			
When do you like to read?			
Experimental			
Before school	1	0	1
Daytime	0	2	2
After school	2	1	-1
Bedtime	6	6	0
Control			
Before school	1	0	-1
Daytime	1	4	3
After school	2	0	-2
Bedtime	5	5	0

QUESTION/GROUP	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER	CHANGE
What do you like to do on a rainy day?			
Experimental			
Watch TV	1	2	1
Toys, games	3	1	2
Paper Pencil	2	0	-2
Reading	0	6	6
Outside	2	0	2
Sleeping/eating	1	0	-1
Control			
Watch TV	1	0	-1
Toys, games	4	3	-1
Paper Pencil	1	4	3
Reading	0	2	2
Outside	1	0	-1
Sleeping/eating	2	0	-2
How much do you like reading?			
Experimental			
not much	0	0	0
a little bit	5	1	-4
a lot	4	8	4
Control			
not much	0	0	0
a little bit	6	1	-5
a lot	3	8	5
How often do you see your mom read?			
Experimental			
not much	1	2	1
sometimes	7	3	-4
a lot	1	4	3
Control			
not much	3	4	1
sometimes	6	4	-2
a lot	0	1	1

QUESTION/GROUP	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER	CHANGE
How much do you read?			
Experimental			
not much	1	0	-1
a little bit	4	2	-2
a lot	4	7	3
Control			
not much	1	0	-1
a little bit	5	6	1
a lot	3	3	0
How often do you see your dad read?			
Experimental			
not often	2	2	0
sometimes	1	6	5
a lot	6	1	-5
Control			
not often	3	2	1
sometimes	5	5	0
a lot	1	2	1

Additional question: Did you like the reading at home program and why?

All indicated that they liked the program.

Comments:

- I wanted to learn about Vietnamese things and my dad read his Vietnamese magazines to me
- You had lots of stories to read. At bedtime I have a bedtime story - my mom didn't really like it because she has to go to work
- I read lots and lots of books. When I go to Ms. Schut every Wednesday I could choose a sticker. My mom could put down how many minutes I could read. My mom liked it

Additional Questions (cont'd)

Comments: (cont'd)

- It shows how many minutes and how many days I read
- It shows that I or my mom read
- I like reading with my mother. My mother liked it too
- I liked reading books, I liked printing it down. I didn't ask my mom if she liked it
- I liked the stories
- I learned much about reading
- There were good stories.

Table 3.
Survey of Parents' Attitudes Toward Reading and Reading Habits

QUESTION	SEPTEMBER	DECEMBER
How often do you visit the public library?		
once/month or more	4	8
less than once/month	2	1
seldom	2	0
Have you bought a book within the last year?		
Yes	9/9	9/9
What magazines and newspapers come to your house?		
Chinese newspapers	5	2
Chinese magazines	2	1
Vietnamese newspapers	1	0
Vietnamese magazines	1	1
English newspapers (Sun, Province)	3	3
English magazines (Sesame Street, National Geographic, McLean's, Time)	3	4
None	1	1
If your child brought home homework would you want it to be?		
reading	6	8
pencil/paper	2	4
math	2	7
Do you keep in contact with your family by		
letter	6	7
telephone	5	9
in person only	4	2

When do you leave notes for your children?		
When you go to work	3	2
When they are left with a babysitter	1	1
Do you make a shopping list before you go shopping?		
no	6	5
yes	1	2
sometimes	2	2
Do you encourage your children to make cards, lists, etc.?		
yes	5	7
no	4	2
How much time do you spend reading? What do you read? How often and for how long?		
Time spent reading		
30 minutes or more/day	4	5
less than 30 minutes/day	4	4
Reading material mentioned		
Newspapers		
Chinese	2	2
Lang. not identified	5	2
Magazines		
Chinese	2	1
Vietnamese	0	2
Lang. not identified	3	1
Books		
Chinese	1	1
English	2	1
Lang. not identified	1	1
Do you read to your child and how often?		
Daily	3	3
One or more times/week	2	4
Sometimes, seldom, never	4	1

Do you tell stories to your children?		
Yes	8	9
- that you make up	1	4
- that are family stories	4	6
- that are stories you have read	5	7
- stories about myself when I was young	2	
- stories about Vietnam		
How often does your child choose to read?		
Every day	4	6
Almost every day	1	2
Sometimes	3	
When I make him read	1	
Where do you keep pencils, paper, pens, erasers and rulers in your house?		
In child's desk, room, or backpack	3	5
In parent's desk	3	3
On coffee table	1	
No paper, but some pencils and pen	1	
In bedroom, kitchen, study room		1

Additional Question

15. What do you see as a benefit of a Home Reading Program

(a) for you
-go to the library more often
-we get closer together, he is not shy about asking me questions when he does not understand something

Additional Questions (cont'd)

- learned more English
- feel happy when my child improves
- my knowledge widened as I read to my son
- I feel closer to my child, I enjoy that time
- I read more English and learn more vocabulary
- I learned more English and spent time learning more about everything
- no benefit, don't know enough English
- learned more English

(b) for your child

- became more hard-working in studying
- became very responsible in studying and homework
- my child learns more from reading different kinds of books
- enjoys reading, reading has improved
- reading has improved, able to recognize more words, increased interest in reading
- enjoys reading time
- is learning a lot of words
- it helps in developing his English
- trained child to be self-motivated to read and have enthusiasum
- helps child's other work in school to become better
- reads more fluently, has more vocabulary
- brighter, smarter, loves to read, makes good progress in school
- learned some Vietnamese
- spends more time on learning English, reading and writing

Reading Logs

Students and parents kept a reading log which showed the type of activity the child and parent carried out: storytelling by parent to child, reading by parent to child, or reading by child to parent. Parents and students also recorded the date and the amount of time spent on the activity. Each week the reading logs were brought to the non-enrolling teacher, and students were rewarded with a sticker just for getting the log there.

Students turned in their books regularly, albeit occasionally a day late. In one case the student and parent could not seem to understand how the log was to be filled in no matter how many times it was explained and demonstrated to them. A rough tally of those reading logs returned intact on December 12 (some were quite tattered with pages missing), showed that parents had faithfully spent the time we had requested of them. The predominant activity chosen by parents was having their children read to them, with some storytelling by parents happening occasionally. In one case, with a child who was a non-reader, the activity was exclusively that of the parent reading to the child.

Reading Record Books - books recorded as read

	Total books	Average/student
Experimental group	317 books	35.2 books per student
Control group	225 books	25 books per student

Daily Borrowing Record - books taken home (no monitoring of whether they were actually read)

	Total books	Average/student
Experimental group	-206 books	-22.8 books
Control group	-177 books	-19.6 books

THE ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA COLLECTED

Reading Growth as Measured on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test

Scores on the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test -- Reading Comprehension clusted showed an average of 4 months growth for the experimental group and 2.9 months for the control group. The range of growth for the Experimental group was from 2 to 8 months, and for the control group from 0 to 8 months. It is difficult to assign a great deal of significance to these scores as the sampling is very small and the time period very short. What does stand out is that all children in the experimental group showed at least 2 months' growth whereas at least 3 children in the control group showed growth of 1 month or less. A further breakdown of the scores reveals that one third of the experimental group gained 5 or more months, one third gained 3 months or more, and one third of the group made a minimum of 2 months' growth. In the control group, one third gained 4 months or more, similar to the experimental group, but the other two thirds made much less growth, with one third achieving two months or more and one third gaining 1 month or less. Those students who tested at grade level or better in September were among those who showed the least gain in December. The higher level readers appeared to consolidate their independent reading. This might indicate that a home reading program is most beneficial for those children who are at earlier stages in the reading continuum.

Survey of Children's Attitudes Towards Reading

Two major points emerged in the responses by students in the student questionnaire. A more positive attitude toward reading came out quite clearly as parents and children engaged in this activity together. Secondly, children's views of their parents as readers changed as children came to understand more about reading and as they spent time with their parents in reading activities.

1. Improved attitudes toward reading.

In quantity of books read, there was a significant difference between the two groups. The experimental group read and recorded an average of 10.2 more books than the control group during the project period.

The experimental group expanded their perception of places where they could read, including in the car, at home, at school and at their parent's workplace. It would appear that for the experimental group, reading has become an activity of choice, occurring where time and place permit. For the control group, reading continued to occur only at school and at home, suggesting reading as a formal obligatory activity rather than one of pleasure.

That reading has become a leisure activity for children in the experimental group is also supported in the children's responses to the question about activities they choose to do on rainy days. While in the September survey, no one in either group chose reading as a preferred activity for a rainy day, in December, an overwhelming number of students in the experimental group (6 out of 9) chose reading, whereas only 2 out of 9 chose reading in the control group.

The daily borrowing record showed little difference in the number of books borrowed by each group; the experimental group took home only an average of 3.2 more books than the control group. Yet the experimental group still recorded an average of 10 more books than the control group in their Reading Record. The experimental group named 5 more sources of reading materials in the December survey, whereas there was no change in the number of sources of reading materials named by the control group. Range of sources of reading materials cited by the experimental group included both school and public libraries, as well as their own books, books purchased in stores and books delivered by mail.

Thus, the experimental group, by increasing their perception of places where they could obtain reading materials, decreased their reliance on the classroom as a source of reading materials. The experimental group recorded 12.4 more books on average than they borrowed from the classroom. The control group recorded only 5.4 more books per student than they borrowed from the classroom.

While there seemed to be fewer changes in times when children did their reading, there was an indication that children in the control group relied to a greater extent on time provided by the school program for their reading time than did children in the experimental group. In both groups, those children with well-established bedtime reading habits maintained those throughout the research period.

In December all students in both groups indicated a positive attitude towards reading. In response to the question about how much they read, 7 of the 9 children in the experimental group felt that they read a lot, an increase of 3 from the September survey. The control group showed no change with only 3 students perceiving themselves as reading a lot.

2. Student's perceptions of their parents as readers changed.

In the September survey, the experimental group saw their fathers as reading a lot and mothers as reading sometimes. In the December survey, the fathers and mothers changed roles. The students perceived their mothers as reading a lot and the fathers as reading sometimes. This was probably because the majority of the parents who participated in the project were mothers and the reading activities were mostly carried out by mothers.

There was no significant change in how the children in the control group perceived their parents as readers.

When asked with whom they would choose to read if they could choose anyone they wanted, students in the experimental group unanimously chose to read with an adult in December. This was a sharp change from the September survey when only 3 of the 9 chose an adult as someone they would like to read with.

In the control group, 5 of 9 chose an adult to read with in December. In September, none of these children chose an adult as someone with whom they would like to read.

In the responses to the additional question in the December survey, mothers figured predominantly in the students' reasons for their enjoyment of the home reading program. The child could consistently count on an adult sharing a book with him or her. The variety and abundance of stories were important to the children. Stories and book sharing were seen as positive and pleasant experiences for both adult and child. Students seemed to see reading as an activity through which they could receive approval and affection from their parents.

Survey of Parents' Reading Habits and Attitudes Toward Reading

The parent responses to the questionnaire in December confirmed the results shown in the questionnaire to students. During the term of the project, literacy events in the home increased and parental attitudes toward reading and their ability to help their children with English books and materials became more positive.

Parents' use of the public libraries increased noticeably. Weekly or bi-weekly visits to the Library in September were non-existent, whereas in December three parents went either once a week or once every two weeks. In September, four parents indicated that they never went to the Library or went only a couple of times a year. In December, no one said that they never went to the library and only one parent said he/she was not going to the Library regularly.

Parents increased the frequency of telling stories to their children. Within the framework of the project, it appears that, in affirming the value of oral story-telling traditions, the parents found a way to link first and second language in literacy activities.

By the end of the project, the parents saw that their children were willingly choosing to read as a daily activity within the home setting. Any negative connotation indicated in September by comments such as "when I make him read", had completely disappeared.

There appeared to be an increase in the time parents themselves spent reading. Parents who had spent regular time reading maintained their reading habits. Those who indicated in September that they read little or seldom, showed an increase in time spent reading in the December survey.

By December, all parents were involved in reading to their children for a variety of time periods that were more frequent and slightly longer than in September.

Little change was noted in the use of cards, letters and written messages used in the home by parents and children. In attempting to record the number and types of literacy events in the home, the researchers came to understand that literacy events that are taken for granted in an English-speaking home do not necessarily have counterparts in other cultures. The researchers learned that the intricacies of Asian languages and scripts make it more likely that parents rely on memory and oral messages than on note, cards and letters.

Parents in general felt very positive, as did their children, about the home reading project. They stated that they themselves had benefited from the home reading program because their own knowledge of English improved, their general knowledge and vocabulary broadened and their relationships and interactions with their children were closer and more positive. Parents felt that their children benefited by improving their reading achievement, by increasing their self-reliance and improving general school achievement. Parents also noted that children enjoyed the reading time. The similarities of the responses of both parent and child to this question illustrated the mutual enjoyment of the reading time. One parent also felt that his child's knowledge of the home language increased.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

For schools with a large population of students whose first language is not English, and for whom the language in the home is not English, a home reading program which encourages the use of the home language in connection with English can be an effective way to influence positively the attitudes of both parents and children towards reading.

The recognition and support for the use of both the home language and English in reading activities can help parents overcome their reluctance to involve themselves in their children's English school work and can change the children's perception of their parents as readers and learners. Conversely, parents now see their children as active readers.

Understanding the oral traditions of other cultures and building on those oral traditions to make links with written or printed materials is a powerful way to bring children to reading in English. A form of language experience which can involve parents would be to take stories told orally by parents to their children and have the teacher or a reading buddy transcribe the students' English retellings of the stories at school.

The use of a broad variety of reading materials in a home reading program that includes literature which takes the stories and traditions of the home culture can help children and their parents not only bridge but make links between the two cultures in which they live. It is important for school libraries to include such materials in their collections.

The involvement of parents with their children in reading activities gives children a view of reading as a lifetime activity not confined to the school setting. Children begin to understand that reading materials come from a large variety of sources and in many languages. This understanding is part of the development of reading metacognition.

The indication that the reading gains were greater for those children who achieved below grade level suggests that a home reading program is especially important for the early primary grades. For children for whom English is a second language, a home reading program which promotes communication between parents and children about books and stories in both the home language and English is critical to building the motivational factors which are the basis for literacy development.

In involving the parents in the home reading program, the researchers found the use of the multicultural home-school worker invaluable. This person played an important role in making parents comfortable with the demands of the project and enabled them to ask questions and share opinions in their own language. The multicultural worker was able to make personal communications with parents by phone, thus ensuring a good turnout at all meetings. It was also the home-school worker who explained to the researchers the difficulty of quantifying literacy events, in terms of literacy events in the English-speaking home, in the non-English-speaking home.

Workshops for parents to help them choose appropriate materials and to show them some important aspects of shared reading was an important element in the success of the program. Giving parents some skills in dealing with books helped them to make the time shared with their children enjoyable and to avoid making inappropriate demands on the children. Parents responded enthusiastically to the workshops and attendance was consistent at all three workshops.

In establishing a home reading program, it is important that reading logs be kept and that students are rewarded in some small way for recording their reading time and books read. This concrete activity seemed to increase the importance of the project for both parents and children.

Children in the control group relied heavily on materials previously presented to the class by the teacher for both their reading records and their daily borrowing. For children without strong home support for reading it is crucial for the teacher to present a range of materials within the classroom which meets a wide variety or interest and ability levels in order to develop an environment which supports the development of literacy.

SOME TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

A detailed examination of the reading record and the daily borrowing record of the students raises interesting questions. It appears that the students in the experimental group were more adventuresome in their choice of books in both their reading record and daily borrowing. Generally they selected literature which had not been pre-introduced or pre-read in class by the teacher. The speculation is that, because of the confidence that an adult at home would be interested in their choice, and would enjoy interacting with their book, these children were more willing to risk selecting fresh new material. On the other hand, the control group appeared much more cautious and relied heavily on materials previously presented to the class by the teacher for their reading records and daily borrowing. It would be interesting to investigate this point further.

This study did not do any testing of levels of English skills of the students or make any attempt to correlate it with the students' reading gains. Those students whose reading mastery tests were very low in September also had very low levels of English speaking skills. These students did not show high reading gains in December, possibly because they had not yet gained enough English for the tests to be valid. The oral skills come before the reading skills. It might be useful to study what level of English students must have before they start to register real gains on the reading tests.

THE CONCLUSION

We as researchers have enjoyed participating in the project. The interactions with parents have been valuable in the general work of the school, as well as beneficial for the children involved in the project. The enrolling teachers, especially, feel very pleased with the directions the project has taken their students and intend to extend the program to their entire class in the new year.

The project was a learning experience for the researchers, not only in learning about the difficulties and intricacies in carrying out action research, but also in deepening our understanding of the cultures to which our students belong.

Actual classroom-based research is difficult to do on the timeline given for this project. To carry out classroom research effectively, the timelines should at least include the entire school year. A study such as this one would give clearer and more definitive results had it taken place over a longer period of time. In such a short period we have discerned some trends only; the question remains whether these short term trends will be maintained. The study should be carried out again over a longer period, with some logitudinal follow up research.

SUMMER PAIRED READING PROJECT
LEARNING WITH LOVE

Alison K. Beil

This project explored an avenue for parents, as reading partners, to help their children improve reading fluency and comprehension during the summer recess from school. Applying theory and practical instructions obtained from *Helping Children Read: The Paired Reading Handbook*, (Morgan, 1986), the program trained, guided and directed the parents involved to tutor their children for approximately fifteen minutes daily.

Paired Reading has been previously researched among groups of parents and children, in conjunction with regular school-based learning activities, over various periods of time. The method as it was originally designed by Dr. Morgan has been shown to hold great potential for students at all grade levels and ranges of ability. This project, however, was proposed as a summer (out-of-school) reading program. Many students, especially those reading at levels significantly below their grade, often experience frustration in reading tasks. It was recognized that such children would not be motivated to practise reading during the summer. Therefore, reading improvement, over the course of the summer, would be very unlikely. In the primary grades especially, principals and teachers have sometimes observed that slow readers return to school in September, seeming to have lost reading skills they had acquired by the end of the previous year. It is logically presumed that such attrition results from a lack of practice and reinforcement of skills. The duration of this program was therefore confined to the summer months, although previous studies with Paired Reading have shown the greatest improvements occurring over terms of three months or longer. (Morgan, Chapter 8, The Research Results, p. 104-111).

This program was presented to parents as a method of home practice which could be less frustrating and more enjoyable than other methods they have tried, and as an opportunity to help with research. Obviously, many variables were anticipated to affect outcomes. The quality of tutoring, degree of fidelity applying the method, and degree of persistence throughout the summer were expected to vary among the individuals involved. Although commitment of daily time and adherence to the method were strongly encouraged, it was predicable that constancy would prove difficult for some pairs, and that some discontinuance might result. How much difficulty and what reasons remained to be seen. The purpose of the project, therefore, was not merely to reveal changes in levels of reading skill, but also to explore the variables and circumstances which may be shown to influence reading development, and specifically to reveal common difficulties or positive factors in the use of this method by parents with their children.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Recruitment

The children were recruited from elementary schools in a jurisdiction composed of a variety of urban, rural and semi-rural schools. Since time constraints imposed a limitation on the amount of advertising which was practical, the assistance of administrators and resource-room teachers from thirteen schools was requested to help identify prospective parent-child pairs and advise them of the summer program. Parents desiring more information were asked to telephone the researcher. An overwhelming response of about 75 telephone calls came from concerned parents within a period of three weeks.

As a result of this initial contact, a group of 38 parents responded to an invitation by attending an evening seminar at a local public library. Paired Reading and language acquisition theory were discussed. The usual problems and frustrations associated with tutoring one's own children were also explored. Paired Reading was demonstrated and information packages were supplied. Further instructions in regard to detailed session plans and a checklist of guidelines for proper adherence to the technique were provided. (See Appendices A, B and C.) Finally, the parents were briefed on the research project and the role they would be asked to perform. The advantages to participating in the program versus implementing the method without the aid and advice of the supervisor were discussed. Following this seminar, parents were invited to enrol in the program and bring their children for pre-program reading testing.

During the test sessions, the parents were given further instruction about Paired Reading, on an individual or small group basis. Potential difficulties or problems were considered and potential solutions were offered. Parents were encouraged to contact the program supervisor with any concerns or questions as soon as any arose.

Prior to writing the test, the children were also instructed as to the intent of the program. They were informed about the method as a way of helping them to practice reading over the summer, making reading together something enjoyable and helpful. In regard to the research, they were given a pep-talk about the importance of reading skills for themselves and others. The children's cooperation with their parents as reading partners was encouraged. They were asked to provide comments and ideas throughout the program as important information for the research which could be helpful to themselves and others.

The data pertaining to the children tested in June is listed in Table 1. A total of 34 children were tested and among these there were found only two whose scores were above their appropriate grade equivalent. Clearly, the result of this recruitment was the identification of a group of children with generally low levels of reading ability in respect of their relative ages and grade levels.

Table 1.
Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Results: June, 1990

Grade Completed	Age	Spring Grade Equivalent Test Score	
0	6	0.9**	1 beginning reader entering grade 1
1	7	1.5	
1	6	1.3	
1	7	1.5	
1	7	1.8*	
1	6	1.3	
1	7	1.5	14 children completed grade 1 average score 1.4
1	7	1.3	
1	6	1.4	
1	6	1.2	
1	6	1.4	
1	6	1.7*	
1	7	1.3	
1	7	1.4	
1	7	2.0*	
2	8	2.2	
2	8	1.7	
2	9	2.0	9 children completed grade 2 average score 1.8
2	8	2.4	
2	7	2.4	
2	7	1.6	
2	7	1.8	
2	8	1.3	
2	7	1.5	
3	8	5.5**	
3	9	2.7	
3	9	2.7	6 children completed grade 3 average score 3.3
3	9	2.9	
3	10	2.4	
3	8	3.5	
4	10	2.3	2 children completed grade 4
4	9	2.8	
5	10	3.3	1 child completed grade 5
6	12	3.4	1 child completed grade 6

* Denotes Grade Equivalent scores within 5 months of actual grade

** Denotes Grade Equivalent scores higher than actual grade

It should also be noted that the level of concern within this group of parents was evidently high. In conversations with these individuals, it was clear that they were keenly aware of their children's lack of comparative progress in reading, and that they perceived this as a real or potential detriment to progress in all academic areas. This awareness had resulted mainly from school progress reporting and parent-teacher interviews. Many of the parents expressed optimism and even gratitude, recognizing Paired Reading to offer more promise than any method they had previously tried.

Program Description

Paired Reading was introduced as a method which recognizes the unique and special position parents hold to influence and assist their own children to achieve. The affective component, as it relates to learning, was explained: positive feelings and experiences promote learning and the formation of habits, while negative experience and associated emotions may hinder this. The title of the program, "Learning with Love", was chosen with regard to the fact that parents, especially, should demonstrate faith in their children's abilities to learn. Care and respect for the children's own interests, positive example, and patient assistance with the complex task of reading were emphasized.

The parents were asked to begin the Paired Reading program as soon after the end of the school year as possible. They were instructed to follow closely the session plans provided for the first week, and to consult with the supervisor if they required any clarification or encountered any problems. They were further instructed to keep data records as shown in Appendix D, and to make regular tape recordings after the first week. The supervisor maintained availability to all pairs throughout the summer, making periodic telephone contact and home visits where requested or where tape recordings could not be made independently.

Appreciating that the first week, especially, would prove difficult for some pairs, the session plans and guidelines were intentionally kept simple. Parents were initially encouraged to establish a regular place and time for Paired Reading, and to develop a rhythmic reading pace in unison with the child.

At a half-way point in the summer, the researcher, who was herself participating in the program with both of her own children, wrote to each of the pairs registered in the project. The letters followed up on information provided by the project supervisor in regard to various concerns that had been expressed by parents. Personal suggestions together with encouragement were given to each pair. Several of the parents had acknowledged that they had not settled on a good time of day for reading, and that occasionally the child seemed tired, inattentive, or unenthusiastic. Others had noticed that the child was frequently losing the place during reading, or accidentally skipping lines. Observations, based on the personal experience of the researcher in the program, were reported to be helpful during the remainder of the summer. Each letter contained some of the following suggestions:

1) A regular reading time early in the day (right after breakfast or lunch) seems to be most successful.

2) It is better to quit after just 10 minutes of concentrating than to let it drag out and become frustrating for either partner. Limit sessions to 15 minutes unless you both really want to finish a chapter or a story book, and then quit as soon as one of you feels tired.

3) Pick funny stories whenever you are undecided what to read. Take time to talk or laugh about whatever you are reading. Don't rush.

4) Plan to do some other pleasant activity immediately after reading. Reward yourselves each time you read together.

5) Appreciate the effort you are both making and say thank-you to each other each time. Recall how important reading is and how worthwhile practice is. Parents, praise your child, even if it is just for one word read correctly. Notice every success and show your delight!

6) When sitting together on a sofa, it helps to put a pillow under the book to raise it to a level where you can both see it without straining your necks.

7) Try taking turns pointing to the words on each page. For example, a right-handed child sits on the right side and tracks the right-hand pages while the partner sits on the left side and tracks the left-hand pages.

8) Using a book-mark or ruler to cover each line as you read it (from the top down), may help you avoid accidentally skipping lines.

At the end of the summer, all of the parents were contacted and invited to scheduled testing sessions. At these times, while the children wrote the tests, parents were asked to complete a survey questionnaire and encouraged to discuss their observations about the program with the researcher.

Difficulties and Discontinuance

As a summer program the project had an inherent drawback in that the timing did not allow for all initial difficulties to be remedied early. Among the 34 children enrolled in the project, five parents attempted to begin the program while on vacation with their families during the first weeks of the summer. Eight others did not actually get started with the program until after the second week, or tried and then decided to postpone trying again. The reasons varied from "the children going to camp", or "company in the home", to simple opposition and reluctance of the child toward any "school" related activity.

Similar reasons affected some of the pairs' success maintaining regular reading sessions throughout the summer, and can partially explain several withdrawals from the program. One parent attempted to read daily with each of three children, and later opted to continue with only the oldest child. Two withdrew from the project because it became necessary for the families to move, and another because the mother was hospitalized. In two more cases, the parent who began as the reading partner was unable to continue throughout the summer, and while reading with an alternate partner continued on a less regular basis, this was not supported by data or recordings. One parent tried paired reading but reported that both children preferred to read alone, so discontinued.

Despite these drawbacks and difficulties, twenty-five pairs continued throughout the summer and all of these children were tested in the fall, regardless of how many days they actually read. The project goal was to have twenty pairs complete the program. Among the twenty-five there were six pairs who, according to data supplied, practised reading for only one month or less, but still in this group there were four whose scores in comprehension or vocabulary improved. Five of these six parents reported that their child's self-concept and attitude toward reading was much improved.

Within the group of twenty-five pairs, five other parents also reported that it seemed much of the time was spent just encouraging a very reluctant child to read, but that toward the end of the program they recognized that the child was more enthusiastic and showing greater self-confidence. With only two exceptions, all the parents declared their desire and intention to continue paired reading at home, if not daily, then several times a week during the upcoming school year. Several expressed the opinion that it might be easier to fit reading time into the school year schedule than it had been during the summer.

The Data

The data for this study are comprised of three main components.

Testing

The children wrote the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (Canadian Edition) vocabulary and comprehension sections in June and September. The tests were administered by certified teachers according to the prescribed instructions and within the time allotments recommended. This test was chosen for practical reasons in respect of the need to test a variety of children in a group situation and because of the distinction made between vocabulary and comprehension skills:

> *There are some students whose comprehension is limited by a relative lack of ability to decode or understand component words. Other students are able to decode and understand words, but have greater difficulty with the semantic implications of syntax or the logical relationship of ideas. (MacGinitie, p.iv)*

It was hoped that the use of both the vocabulary and comprehension sections might reveal more specifically what type of effect Paired Reading practice has in both of these broad skill areas.

Daily Records

A second component of the data was provided by the parents in daily records and the questionnaire which was completed during the fall testing session. Parents provided details such as the type of material being read, the level of their child's familiarity with this material, the approximate time and numbers of words read each day, the frequency of the child's attempts to read "solo", plus comments in regard to their own feelings and perceptions about the reading sessions. Parents also reported their children's comments, which helped to validate perceived changes in attitude and enthusiasm for reading tasks. These comments are included in the text of this report where appropriate and in the conclusion.

Samples

Thirdly, cassette recordings were obtained from each parent and child, providing "samples" of the paired reading. These have been assessed in conjunction with the daily record sheets, both to verify and substantiate the data supplied by parents and to detect other variables. Specifically, the recordings were monitored for the frequency of each child's attempts at solo reading, the frequency of affirmations or praise comments supplied by each parent and to determine the amount and quality of modelling of appropriate voice expression and pacing evident in the reading.

The compiled data are presented on a spreadsheet, and explained under the headings which follow.

TEST RESULTS

The results of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test for both vocabulary and comprehension sections are shown in Table 2, together with the total scores as grade equivalents. Test sessions were conducted in a school classroom on Saturday mornings.

In June the children were tested with Form 2, at the level suitable for the grade they were just completing. It was later determined that one child had written the same test at school about a week earlier, hence it was not surprising that the resulting score was exceptionally high. For the data included herein, however, this child's original score was obtained from school records. Another child was admitted into the project after the testing date. Test scores for this child were also obtained from school records, since in this case as well the same test form had been written early in June.

In September the children were given test Form 1, of the same level they had written in June. Differences between the June (Spring - SP) and September (Fall - FL) scores should be considered as decimals of a 10 month school year, or grade equivalents (GE). Scores are reported for the Vocabulary test (Voc), Comprehension (Comp) and total grade equivalents. In the discussion which follows, differences of one decimal point or less are not considered significant.

Generally, the results are very encouraging. Although the total range is considerable, it is clear that the program had a substantial improving effect for many of the children involved. From the total scores of the tests, the grade equivalents show that of the twenty five children tested, twelve achieved significantly higher scores at the end of the program, with a range of 2 months to 11 months improvement and the average for this group being 4.7 months improvement over the summer. This may be understood as more than twice the normal rate of improvement expected from regular school instruction. Nine others showed no significant difference and four showed significantly lower scores, a range of two to three months "attrition". The complete range of these total differences is 14 months and the average difference for the whole group of 25 is an increase of 1.7 months, which is considered quite positive when it is remembered that these figures represent changes in measures of reading skills which occurred without concurrent school instruction.

While it is disturbing to note those scores which are substantially lower at the end of the summer, it should also be remembered that similar attrition, observed by professionals in schools, was one of the reasons for designing the project as a summer program. Furthermore, no attempt was made to "screen out" pairs who had not consistently adhered to the program as instructed, and the resulting comparisons have been revealing. Each of these cases is discussed in more detail, under the heading "Case Studies".

Table 2.
Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Results: September, 1990

Case No.	Gd	Age	SP V	FL V	V diff	SP C	FL C	C diff	SP GE	FL GE	GE diff
1	0	6	est. 0.9	1.6	0.7	est. 0.9	1.7	0.8	est. 0.9	1.7	0.8
2	1	6	1.4	1.3	-0.1	1.2	1.2	0.0	1.3	1.2	-0.1
3	1	6	1.4	1.4	0.0	1.2	1.6	0.4	1.3	1.5	0.2
4	1	6	1.3	1.6	0.3	1.5	1.5	0.0	1.4	1.6	0.2
5	1	7	2.0	1.9	-0.1	1.8	1.6	-0.2	2.0	1.7	-0.3
6	1	7	1.6	1.4	-0.2	1.4	1.2	-0.2	1.5	1.3	-0.2
7	1	7	1.3	1.5	0.2	1.6	1.2	-0.4	1.5	1.4	-0.1
8	1	7	1.6	1.6	0.0	2.0	2.3	0.3	1.8	1.9	0.1
9	1	7	1.5	1.8	0.3	1.5	1.6	0.1	1.5	1.7	0.2
*10	1	7	1.4	1.5	0.1	1.3	1.6	0.3	1.3	1.6	0.3
11	2	7	1.6	1.7	0.1	1.5	1.5	0.0	1.5	1.5	0.0
12	2	7	2.3	2.7	0.4	2.4	4.2	1.8	2.4	3.1	0.7
13	2	7	1.5	2.6	1.1	1.8	2.5	0.7	1.6	2.5	0.9
14	2	8	2.4	1.8	-0.6	1.9	2.0	0.1	2.2	1.9	-0.3
15	2	8	2.1	1.8	-0.3	1.6	1.5	-0.1	1.7	1.6	-0.1
*16	2	8	2.4	2.9	0.5	2.3	2.6	0.3	2.4	2.7	0.3
17	2	9	2.0	1.7	-0.3	2.1	2.6	0.5	2.0	2.2	0.2
18	3	8	4.8	4.9	0.1	6.6	6.6	0.0	5.5	5.5	0.0
19	3	9	2.9	2.6	-0.3	2.4	2.7	0.3	2.7	2.7	0.0
*20	3	9	2.6	3.1	0.5	2.7	2.4	-0.3	2.7	2.7	0.0
*21	3	9	2.9	4.0	1.1	2.9	2.5	*-0.4	2.9	3.3	0.4
22	3	10	2.7	3.4	0.7	2.0	2.5	0.5	2.4	3.5	1.1
23	4	9	3.3	3.3	0.0	2.5	3.0	0.5	2.8	3.1	0.3
24	4	10	2.6	2.5	-0.1	2.3	2.4	0.1	2.3	2.3	0.0
*25	5	10	4.3	3.7	*-0.6	2.4	2.4	0.0	3.3	3.0	-0.3
MEAN	2	8	2.2	2.3	0.1	2.1	2.3	0.2	2.1	2.3	0.2
RANGE	0-5	6-10	3.9	3.6	1.7	5.7	5.4	2.2	4.6	4.3	1.4

* Denotes cases of known factors affecting score reliability

For some of the children, a significant difference in vocabulary score is not accompanied by a similar difference in comprehension score, or vice versa. These differences vary among the children tested, and the average increases for the whole group showed less than one grade point difference between vocabulary and comprehension. From this it is impossible to infer any relationship between Paired Reading and either vocabulary or comprehension skills alone. Comparisons made only between those scores representing significant improvement or attrition show about three months more difference in the area of vocabulary.

These test results should be understood as also reflecting each child's attitude and level of concentration while taking the test. Some children were observed to work very quickly through the vocabulary section, which in both sessions was first. This section assessed word knowledge, and required the children to match words with pictures, synonyms or phrases. The test items in the comprehension section challenged the children to read prose passages and questions, and then select from alternatives a picture or answer which most closely matched their understanding. A few children, especially some of the younger ones, showed signs of fatigue and less attentiveness before the end of the testing session, which may have affected their scores.

This type of test is ideally administered in two separate sessions of 20 and 35 minutes each. Desiring not to inconvenience parents more than necessary, it was presupposed that a recess for refreshment and exercise between sections of the test would suffice. In retrospect it seems that a few of these children still found this strenuous. Although the Gates-MacGinitie test format was very suitable for the purpose of group testing, and group testing was necessary in respect of time constraints, this procedure did not allow for assessment of each child's test related attitude or anxieties.

There are a few known circumstances which undoubtedly affected the reliability of the scores. Two students did not have their glasses with them at the time of testing, one had insufficient sleep the previous night, one reported feeling distracted and anxious to complete the last section and another left many of the vocabulary test items blank, reason not known. These exceptions are noted with asterisks in the table of results (No. 10, 16, 20, 21 and 25). Taking these into consideration, it has still been possible to identify some parallels and make corresponding inferences based on the range of scores in comparison with other variables assessed.

OTHER VARIABLES

A number of other variables have been assessed in relation to test scores to determine what factors may be viewed as common and linked to the relative outcomes. These variables were identified for consideration in respect to what has been theorized about how children learn to read. The results of these variables are summarized in Table 3.

Quantity of Reading

The first three variables, refer to the quantity of reading which was reported. While this is probably the most obvious consideration, one which might be presumed to have the most bearing on outcome, the results show that quantity of reading alone was not significant. Of the terms used, **DAYS** refers to the total number of days for which reading sessions were recorded. **MIN** refers to the *average* number of minutes duration of each of these sessions and **WORDS** refers to the *average* approximate number of words read per session.

Paired Reading has been said to increase the rate at which children read (Morgan, p.64), since they are not left to struggle with unrecognized words. Many comments provided by parents support this. Several younger children noted with pleasure that they finished a "whole book" and did much of the reading solo. An older child was delighted to realize they had read together two junior novels in just a few weeks. Over the two months, however, the numbers of words or pages read per session do not reveal any significant changes, and are therefore averaged for simplicity.

Material Chosen

Dr. Morgan's advice regarding choice of books pertains to three important concepts. One, offering a child a wide selection of materials is viewed as the best "countermeasure to loss of interest". (p.82) Secondly, while familiar material may be helpful to provide practice and build confidence, Dr. Morgan cautions against continuing with "over-easy books", since the child is not likely to "learn much that is new". (p.83) Thirdly, too difficult material is noted to result in the child's reluctance to attempt solo reading at all, or even reading together with some degree of accuracy and independence. (p.83)

The material chosen by participants in this project has been rated in terms of the child's familiarity with it and the degree of challenge: **F**, (familiar - very easy), **SF**, (somewhat familiar, more challenge) or **N** (entirely new, maximum challenge). Comparing these figures with the total number of reading sessions in each case, it is clear that with few exceptions, children chose challenging, unfamiliar material frequently. All of the cases showing significant improvement correspond with a majority of challenging material, or a relatively consistent choice of new material. Among those showing insignificant or negative change, it is evident that material was more frequently familiar and not challenging, or *overly* difficult as can be determined by considering other variables.

Table 3. Paired Reading Variables Considered in Relation to Grade Equivalent Changes

Case No.	GE diff	Quantity of Reading			Material Chosen			Partner Changes	Pace	Track	Tone	Solo	Praise	Choice	Joy 1	Joy 2
		Days	Min.	Words	"F"	"SF"	"N"									
1	0.8	45	13	450	11	5	29	2	4	H	H	3	3	G	4	5
2	-0.1	66	12	400	6	21	39	2	1	M	M	2	0	G	2	2
3	0.2	59	17	300	0	0	59	3	2	M	M	4	0	G	3	4
**4	0.2	31						est.10								
5	-0.3	29	13	200	8	8	13	0		H		5		G		
6	-0.2	47	20	200	9	4	34	4	1	L	L	2	1	G	2	2
7	-0.1	22	15	275	6	3	13	10	3	M	L	1	2	G	2	4
8	0.1	30	13	650	4	10	16	0	2	H	H	2	3	P	3	4
9	0.2	47	14	400	11	19	17	6	3	H	H	3	1	G	4	5
*10	0.3	54	14	450	11	17	26	0	4	M	M	2	2	G	4	5
**11	0.0	est.20						10		H					1	1
12	0.7	63	14	500	12	11	40	12	2	L	M	4	2	G	4	4
13	0.9	45	13	350			45	0	5	H	H	3	5	G	2	5
14	-0.3	60	12	400	35	19	6	7	2	M	H	4	2	P	1	3
15	-0.1	24	13	350	3	4	17	10	2	M	H	2	2	G	3	3
*16	0.3	47	13	600	11	11	25	0	4	H	L	3	3	G	2	4
17	0.2	37	12	450	0	2	35	0	3	L	H	3	3	G	1	3
18	0.0	50	13	1000	6	0	44	2	1	L	H	5	0	G	3	3
19	0.0	59	14	850	2	2	55	0	2	H	M	3	1	C	3	3
*20	0.0	62	11	750	0	8	54	0	1	M	L	2	0	G	2	2
*21	0.4	52	15	850	0	16	36	2	4	H	H	4	3	G	5	5
22	1.1	75	14	700	2	0	73	15	4	H	M	5	4	G	4	5
23	0.3	25	13	800	8	0	17	0	3	H	H	3	2	G	2	4
24	0.0	30	10	450	1	1	28	15	1	L	M	3	0	G	3	3
*25	-0.3	60	15	900	5	4	51	2	2	H	L	1	1	C	0	2
MEAN	0.17	46	14	535	7	8	34	4	3	H(12)	H(10)	3	2	G(19)	3	4
RANGE	1.4	22-75	11-20	800	0-35	0-21	6-73	0-15	1-5	L-H	L-H	1-5	0-5		0-5	1-5

* Denotes cases of known factors affecting score reliability of test
** Denotes some data not available for this case

Partner Changes

Approximately 25% of the parents found it necessary or prudent to share the partner role with a spouse or other relative, and in other cases substitute partners filled in occasionally. Changing the reading partner was cautioned against as possibly having an adverse effect on continuity or even the "risk of confusing the child". (Morgan, p.42) These partner changes (**PC**) have been noted for comparison with the number of days. No correspondence can be identified between frequency of partner changes and end result provided that other variables were favourable. In fact, the case with the highest recorded improvement is one where both parents took turns as reading partners.

Pace

Related to the quantity of reading, it must be understood that in Paired Reading, the **PACE** is fundamentally important. Parents were instructed to strive to develop a rhythmic pace, in *unison* with the child, similar in concept to people singing together. Dr. Morgan stresses that an important feature of the technique is the fact that it frequently enables children to read correctly, first time, words they are not familiar with. This is possible because the parent is in effect giving the child a "piggy-back" through the more difficult words while they read together. (Morgan, p.45) As well, the combination of simultaneous (immediate) example and feedback, provided through reading together, distinguishes Paired Reading from other methods such as shared reading or just hearing children read.

The **PACE** variable was assessed mainly from monitoring tape recordings, with some consideration given to the parents' own observations. The ratings given for this variable range from 1 (practically no "duet" pacing) to 5 (even, comfortable pace and evidence of true "piggy-backing").

In retrospect, it appears that initial difficulty with establishing pace is one of the reasons why several of the pairs did not enjoy substantial success with the program. Only three parents noted that they realized they were reading too fast after they made the first tape recording and thereafter adjusted the pace. Where the tendency persisted for the parent to "lead" and the child to "echo", the technique was not favourably employed. In three other cases, the parent yielded almost entirely to the child's desire to read solo, and merely assisted with words the child did not recognize on sight. Two parents commented it was difficult and frustrating to have to slow the pace down so much. Another, however, commented that the task of paying attention to the meaning of the text while at the same time matching the child's pace and providing help, encouragement and praise, required tremendous concentration. This, together with the data supplied, tends to reinforce the conclusion that the success of this method depends largely on the parent promoting, encouraging and praising the *child's* correct reading, more than the actual quantity of reading done. Comparing averages for this variable between the cases showing improvement and those not, a substantial difference is evident. Dr. Morgan has noted that when the technique is properly mastered, the child will generally absorb and remember much more of the content than the parent, since "The technique is designed so that the parent keeps the procedures going, while the child learns and enjoys the words being read". (p.64)

Attention to Text and Expression

Instructions for the program suggested the parent should point to each word as it is read, or better, the child do the pointing as a way of promoting attention to the text. (Morgan, p.84) **TRACK** has been included in the data as an indicator of the child's level of attention, as reported by parents' observations of how frequently the child pointed. It has been rated as low, moderate or high. Proportionally more attentiveness and frequency of tracking was reported among those cases where improvement was significant.

Expression and **TONE** (intonation) have been evaluated as low, moderate or high, since it is appreciated that this also factors in the development of cognitive processes associated with reading. There is frequently agreement between moderate to high expressiveness in the reading and levels of attentiveness, with corresponding significant improvement. Low to moderate expression is found to correspond more often with insignificant or negative change.

"Solo" Reading

The variable **SOLO** refers to the estimated frequency of the child's attempts to read alone. The range is from 1 (almost entirely reading together) to 5 (constantly attempting solo). Considered alone, the results for this variable give only a slight indication of more frequent attempts at solo reading within the group of improved readers. However, study of the cases involved has also revealed that solo reading of familiar or easily managed material, without corresponding intrinsic reinforcement being offered, was of little benefit. High frequency of solo reading, together with challenging, unfamiliar material, supported with praise, is clearly more evident in the cases showing the most improved reading.

Variables Pertaining to the Affective Domain

Several variables pertaining to feelings and attitudes have also been assessed. Learning theory asserts that affective components override all cognitive dimensions of successful learning.

Perhaps the most important feature of Paired Reading is the addition of steady **PRAISE** as positive reinforcement for the child's attempts and success at reading alone. Indeed it seems quite likely that the entire method, designed to encourage children to learn from experience with challenging material, actually depends on liberal benevolence in this respect. This variable was also assessed from the tape recordings and rated from 0 (no evidence of praise on the recording) to 5 (constant patter of praise in response to solo reading). In many cases, praise was difficult to detect and not very frequent. Generally, there is a strong correlation between greater improvement and more praise or encouragement.

Another feature of Paired Reading is that the children's personal choice of reading material increases motivation and enthusiasm for the exercise of reading. Some guidance was suggested, but parents were cautioned against exerting too much influence or persuasion. **CHOICE**, as a variable here is described as **G**, (child's choice, with some guidance) **C**, (child's choice without guidance) and in two cases, **P**, (the child preferred the parent to choose).

Materials chosen varied as picture books, comic books, short stories, poems, children's magazines and junior novels, and were mainly age appropriate, although two pairs reported success attempting adult literature such as informational brochures. The type of material cannot be interpreted as having any significant bearing on outcome in this study, beyond that assessed in terms of level of familiarity and challenge.

Finally, personal comments and observations (from both parents and children), included in the data collected, have been taken into account as a reflection of the child's overall enthusiasm and enjoyment of the program. (**JOY 1 & 2**) This is reported as a numerical value from 1 (extremely reluctant) to 5 (high enthusiasm) and is shown as remaining relatively constant or changing during the summer. Some of the positive comments included "________ is more confident lately, willing to go solo", "I can read this all myself!", "I can read these hard words!", "familiar stories have been a big boost to confidence", "_______ read *avalanche* by himself", "more confidence at end of summer, this showed in _______'s choice of books". For this variable also, there is evidence of a correlation between more positive attitude and greater improvement.

Assessment of these variables has provided a basis for comparisons among the cases studied, the most significant of which will be discussed under the next heading. However, several trends were observed in reference to all the cases. Quantity and speed of reading in daily sessions did not increase substantially during the term of this program, although most of the parents reported their children's attitudes toward reading practice improved. Careful pacing, such that the child was not pressured or hurried, and deliberate parental modelling of punctuation and expression appear to have promoted the child's attentiveness in several cases. In some other cases, the converse seems to hold true. Among the parents who appear to have been most comfortable with the method it is evident that their children soon realized unfamiliar words would no longer pose frustration. These children felt encouraged to choose more challenging material and more frequently attempted solo reading. Praise for effort and solo reading evidently encouraged and reinforced learning.

CASE STUDIES

Each case in this program has been individually assessed in order to gain more insight as to the relative successes and difficulties. General assessment of each case considered tenacity of practice and enthusiasm for the method, implementation and adherence to guidelines, and lastly, changes in the child's attitude and self-concept together with test results. However, in order to expedite and simplify the reporting, cases have been grouped for consideration, as those showing the most significant attrition or gains, according to differences in grade equivalent test scores.

Table 4 provides data on GE differences and other variables for these two groups of cases. Additional test information for these cases is available from Table 2.

Cases of Significant Attrition (GE difference negative)

Firstly, there were four children whose resulting scores suggest attrition of 2 to 3 months. Among these No. 25 cannot be considered reliable since 25% of the test items in the vocabulary section were not answered. Although this pair read together for 60 days, approximately 900 words each session, solo reading was almost never attempted and praise was not evident. The parent in this case reported that the child continually approached the task with great reluctance. While the choice of material was entirely the child's, it seems the child protestingly resorted to any book until the last two weeks in the summer when it was reported " ______ finally got hooked" on a junior novel that had been recommended by a peer. On a positive note, the parent reported that this child's reading had progressively become "less stilted", and with the experience of finally using a book the child enjoyed, they felt encouraged to continue practice during the school year.

In retrospect, since this child was known to have a low self-concept in regard to reading, it is indeed unfortunate that familiar material was not used early in the summer, combined with lots of praise, in order to reinforce skills and build confidence.

Table 4. Cases with Most Significant Attrition or Gain

Case No.	GE diff	Quantity of Reading			Material Chosen			Partner Changes	Pace	Track	Tone	Solo	Praise	Choice	Joy 1	Joy 2
		Days	Min.	Words	"F"	"SF"	"N"									
G.E. Negative Cases																
*25	-0.3	60	15	900	5	4	51	2	2	H	L	1	1	C	0	2
14	-0.3	60	12	400	35	19	6	7	2	M	H	4	2	P	1	3
6	-0.2	47	20	200	9	4	34	4	1	L	L	2	1	G	2	2
5	-0.3	29	13	200	8	8	13	0		H		5		G		
(mean)	-0.28	49	15	425	14	9	26	3	1.7	H(2)	L(2)	3.0	1.3	G(2)	1.0	2.3
G.E. Positive Cases																
22	1.1	75	14	700	2	0	73	15	4	H	M	5	4	G	3	4
13	0.9	45	13	350			45	0	5	H	H	3	5	G	2	5
12	0.7	63	14	500	12	11	40	12	2	L	M	4	2	G	4	4
1	0.8	45	13	450	11	5	29	2	4	H	H	3	3	G	4	5
*21	0.4	52	15	850	0	16	36	2	4	H	H	4	3	G	5	5
*10	0.3	54	14	450	11	17	26	0	4	M	M	2	2	G	4	5
*16	0.3	47	13	600	11	11	25	0	4	H	L	3	3	G	2	4
23	0.3	25	13	800	8	0	17	0	3	H	H	3	2	G	2	4
**4	0.2	31						est.10								
3	0.2	59	17	300	0	0	59	3	2	M	M	4	0	G	3	4
9	0.2	47	14	400	11	19	17	6	3	H	H	3	1	G	4	5
17	0.2	37	12	450	0	2	35	0	3	L	H	3	3	G	1	3
(mean)	0.47	48	14	530	7	8.1	37	4	3.5	H(7)	H(6)	3.4	2.5	G(11)	3.1	4.4

* denotes cases of known factors affecting score reliability
** denotes some data not available for this case

The other cases in this group pertain to three children who began the program with scores near the grade 2 level. No. 14 was particularly puzzling until the recordings were assessed. This pair also read continuously, from mostly familiar, simple picture books. but while the child's attitude was positive, frequent illness and fatigue were reported. This child attempted solo reading frequently, but praise was rarely evident on recordings. Furthermore, the tape revealed the reason for relatively few words being read each session. The reading was constantly interspersed with the child's questions and comments, sometimes completely unrelated to the material, plus the parent's urging to "pay attention".

In another case where very few words were read each session, (No. 6) the parent also reported the child's frequent fatigue and her own frustration. In this case most of the material chosen was unfamiliar, the child rarely attempted solo and seldom tracked the words. Again, the recordings revealed that the child was inattentive and sometimes distracted by other things. Monitoring the pace, which was generally slow and monotonous, it became obvious that the child was constantly echoing the parent's lead.

Another pair (No. 5) who read relatively few words each session continued the program for less than one month. In this case, although a variety of material was chosen and the child tracked consistently, frequent fatigue was reported together with the child's request for the parent to finish the story. No recordings were obtained from this pair, but it was later learned that the child usually began by reading solo while the parent supplied only corrections. This suggests that the technique was altered substantially. The parent who served as partner in this case was not the same one who initially attended the seminar.

A number of common difficulties are noted in these cases: the children's fatigue associated with illness or reading times late in the day, their low levels of attention or involvement, and the difficulties with pace, with very few words being read per session and little or no praise. These difficulties and other similarities among variables are also noted in those cases where the test results have shown no significant change.

One other case (No. 18) was particularly puzzling until the recordings and parent's comments were assessed. This pertains to the child whose initial test score was well above average, but whose final score showed no significant change. In this case the pair read together from "easy" books for about two weeks. Thereafter it appears that the child "took over", and the parent listened, supplying help on request. No praise, or comment, was evident on the recordings which were entirely the child reading solo, again suggesting a departure from the technique. The parent reported a concern about the child's reading as being "faster, but careless...misses words and lines". Confidence and voice expression seem to be the main improvements in this case. "______ puts more inflection...makes it sound interesting...willing to tackle any book...reading newspaper left open on table".

Even where the quantity of reading is substantial, it is evident that poor pacing, fatigue, distraction, or insufficient challenge are factors which inhibit gains. The lack of reinforcement through praise is a significant factor inhibiting success. Without such reinforcement there is apparently little motivation to increase attentiveness or effort. However, more remains to be considered in respect to those who benefited from the program.

Cases of Significant Gains (GE difference positive)

The most significant improvement is shown in the scores of a child heading into grade four who did the most reading (No. 22). This pair continued reading right up until the date of the fall testing, averaging about 700 words per session. In this case, both parents shared the partner role, and seemed to have no difficulty staying with the guidelines for the method. It was noted that about half-way through the summer the child discontinued the practice of pointing to the words, as losing place was not a problem. The material chosen was almost entirely unfamiliar, but the child regularly attempted solo reading with constant support and praise evident in the recordings. A high degree of expression could clearly be heard in the readings and the pace appears to have been comfortable. This child's comments show an initially positive attitude. "I like this book, this will be fun". The parents reported that this initial enthusiasm flagged at times, but the child practised daily (no more than fifteen minutes) followed by a preferred activity. The parents noted attempts at new, sometimes difficult words as early as the third week, and had perceived improvement at seven weeks. "I thought _____ was reading at the same level...now I realize ______ has improved all along".

Another case (No. 13) is special. Although it was the mother who originally attended the seminar, she gave the information package and the responsibility to a sitter who read with the child every weekday. In this case, the number of words read per session was not proportionally high, but the child tracked consistently. This pair did the reading in conjunction with a library program and therefore enjoyed a wide selection of new material. In conversation with the sitter, it was learned that the child began the program reluctantly, but gradually became more enthusiastic and was really making progress in the last two weeks. This growing enthusiasm was evident in the recordings, where voice tone and expression were exceptional. This child's solo reading was described thus: "at the start, never, but near the end, always". In the recordings, praise was freely given for every solo attempt. As well, the sitter offered enthusiastic comments and posed questions as comprehension checks at virtually every page break in the picture books.

A very high increase between comprehension test scores for one child demanded close scrutiny (No. 12). This pair apparently established a positive habit over the first two weeks reading about 500 words every day. This continued while the child visited a relative who took on the partner role for another two weeks.

Although some protesting was reported, ("____ claimed the holidays as free time") it is evident from other comments that this child's attitude was actually positive, and very determined ("story is too advanced but _____ really wants to read it...enjoying this and trying hard to get big words").

This child chose a great variety of reading material and the parent's comments reveal attentiveness to comprehension ("anticipating what will happen next", "paying attention to the story -- keeping up as it unfolds", "reads better when words are in small groups as in comics", and "thinking that the story is not the same as the show"). Not surprisingly, the recordings also revealed that this parent carefully modelled expression and punctuation. It was noted that this child "preferred" to read solo.

Another case is unique in that the child was the only pre-schooler in the program (No. 1). This child had independently developed some reading ability prior to the summer, without instruction or previous paired reading. Initial test scores for this child are estimated since total correct answers were one or two points short of a reliable grade equivalent. In this case the parent gave lots of guidance in the selection of materials, but left the final choice to the child. Selections began with familiar stories but included more unfamiliar picture books as the summer progressed. Difficulties making a regular time for reading at the beginning and end of the summer resulted in consistent reading for only 45 days. Pace was fairly fast during reading together, however; the child was eager to demonstrate how well he could read by himself. His comments expressed growing confidence and satisfaction with this admired skill. ("I can even read these *hard* words!") The quantity of praise supplied was only moderate.

Case No. 21 shares the distinction of the highest increase in vocabulary score with another child. The final comprehension score may be unreliably low. The tester advised that this child was distracted at the end of the testing session and rushed to finish after the others. This pair read from mainly new materials, but tended to stay with favourite chapter books for days in succession. It was noted that this child's attitude was very positive and that he "concentrated" and "read for meaning". This pair read much together but the child signalled to read solo several times in each session. Over the summer he began self-correcting more frequently. The child's comments were generally positive, including: "I know I'm reading better, it's getting easier".

Among other cases showing significant improvement there are a few still meriting comment. In case No. 10, it was reported that the child responded very positively to the method. This parent encouraged the child to choose familiar books early in the summer and was delighted to see confidence increase dramatically. Later in the program this pair was successfully reading more challenging material, even an adult-level brochure. In this case the parent suggested the September test score might have been higher if the child had had more sleep the previous night. It was also reported that the family business occasionally conflicted with reading times, and that sessions had been less positive when the child was tired.

Case No. 16 is one where the child wrote the September test without glasses. Here again, the parent reported a positive change in enthusiasm and confidence which was evident in the child's choice of books toward the end of the summer. This parent also noticed more frequent self-correcting as the summer progressed. The recordings revealed that praise was often associated with the child's correcting. Listening to this pair I was delighted to note that praise actually seemed to increase the enthusiasm evident in the child's voice.

Two more cases (No. 23 and No. 17) show significant improvement despite the fact that Paired Reading continued for less than five weeks. In both these cases the children tackled mostly new material, beginning unenthusiastically but becoming very determined. Both of these parents were very supportive as partners. One of these children attempted solo infrequently but was rewarded with very enthusiastic praise. The other signalled to read solo more frequently and was supported with very attentive and tactful help, plus moderate praise.

Considering all these cases, several trends are observed. Firstly, it is evident that more progress was made by pairs who settled into a habit of reading at a usually consistent time of day when the child could maintain a high level of attention and involvement in the sessions. Secondly, the total quantity of reading practice appears to have some bearing on results, but not as much as other variables affecting quality. Most substantial gains appear to be associated with frequent solo attempts on challenging new material, although the use of familiar material was very beneficial for boosting confidence and positive attitude. Related to this, the "praise" factor was again very significant.

In the guidelines for the method, praise is intended to reinforce correct solo reading and to motivate the child toward more challenge and risk-taking. However, in these cases there is also evidence that praise motivates children to greater concentration and increased comprehension, more frequent self-correcting, better tone and expression, and generally more enjoyment of the task.

CONCLUSION

Paired Reading and Theory of How Reading is Learned

Theory pertaining to how children learn to read has been described in detail by many experts in the field. Essentially, reading is a human communication process which involves interaction between visual symbols for sound and the human brain, a meaning-seeking organ. Psycho-motor, cognitive and affective components are all recognized as essential to the development of this highly complex ability. (Mickelson, 1990, p.89) The effectiveness of Paired Reading can best be understood in relation to this theory.

Since all learning is developmental, proceeding from general to specific, it is natural for children to learn about reading using a holistic, experience based approach. Wide and varied experience with written language in meaningful contexts is essential. Attempts to teach the features of letters, phonetics, orthographics, syntax, grammar and such, outside of meaningful context, as though children were blank computer disks to be filled up with data, have achieved little success. Such attempts may be compared with the usefulness of trying to decipher an unknown word out of context. Using phonetic or orthographic clues the word may be successfully pronounced, but the learner will still have no idea of what the word means, (Mickelson, 1990, p.77) as anyone who has played the game "Balderdash" can appreciate.

Children learn to recognize and interpret numerous patterns in language as clues to meaning. In so doing, they use their strengths (what they already know) to compensate for any weaknesses. While language is full of stimuli and patterns, no one of these, by itself, is sufficiently reliable to ensure comprehension. Readers therefore depend on "redundancies" inherent in language. (Mickelson, 1990, p.21)

Learning how to speak, children have already developed a tremendous cognitive bank of language experience. With further experience the brain is challenged to process more stimuli and construct more schemata, analyzing and categorizing new information with that which is already learned. "Learners restructure what they hear and see to fit their own levels of development". (Forester & Mickelson, 1978)

Paired Reading matches this theory perfectly, since "it does not make the child use any particular method of working words out, but instead encourages by success and praise anything that actually works; it automatically strengthens any methods which do work, and discourages any which don't". (Morgan, p.53) Getting at meaning is the primary motivation. When paired reading is practised accurately it is the child who focuses on comprehending text while the parent's or tutor's attention must be focused more directly on the technique itself. Although it is evident that questions and discussion related to the meaning of the text will assist and enhance comprehension, overall success depends on the parent or tutor to ensure that practice is a positive learning experience for the child. While the method itself is ideal, it requires a great deal of attention and consistency.

Paired Reading was designed with respect for behavioral principals. (Morgan, p.44) Initially, the tutor promotes a positive attitude with respect to the child's interests and ability, assisting but not interfering in the child's choice of material.

Next, the tutor ensures that reading is done comfortably and regularly, providing intrinsic and extrinsic rewards so that practice becomes both enjoyable and habitual.

During reading together, the tutor provides a model with appropriate pace, punctuation and expression. This model assists the learner to comprehend regardless of the difficulties inherent in the text, and to make predictions, infer, and monitor for mistakes. The method respects that learning to read requires the taking of risks (Mickelson, 1990, p.20), and the making of guesses (ibid., p.95). Reading together provides a non-threatening, supportive environment which encourages the child to take risks to read challenging material independently. The tutor encourages and reinforces learning by responding with praise to signals and correct solo reading, giving assistance and pointing to mistakes as necessary.

Furthermore, this method recognizes that automaticity, or fluency, develops with continued practice. (ibid, p.29) As children's skills grow to the point where they no longer have to think about forms and usage in text they encounter, they just read it. All learning should be so benevolent.

The Project Results: Discovery and Direction

The aim of this project was to explore and assess the use of Paired Reading by parents, as a remedial technique with their children. Overall, the program is considered successful because of the gains achieved by many of the children and the fact that in all but two cases parents reported positive change in their child's attitude toward reading generally.

With one exception, a mother who did not attend the seminar, all the parents reported on the seminar and materials as being sufficiently informative, and the supervisor was reported to be very helpful. A number of parents expressed gratitude, saying they were very glad to be introduced to the method, that it was found to be much better than other methods previously tried, and that the program provided much incentive. Among the parents who persisted in the program, regardless of difficulties or outcome, all but two expressed the intention to continue Paired Reading at home during the school year. The request for tape recordings of the readings was also noted to provide incentive to read regularly. Several parents reported their children found much pleasure in "playing it back and re-reading with the tape".

The results have shown that 35% of the parents were successful in assisting their children to significantly improve reading skills over a short period of time, adhering to the technique with fidelity. The gains evident in this group (average improvement of 4.7 months) are similar to those reported in other studies. (Morgan, p.109) It was not the intention of this project to merely reinforce the conclusions of previous studies which have shown Paired Reading to be an effective method. This study has shown that many parents can utilize this method to help their own children, even when these children are considered to be "slow" or "at risk", and without the constant involvement of professionals.

This project has also shown that some pairs experienced difficulties and frustration trying to adhere to the technique. Some pairs altered the technique and some drifted sufficiently far from the guidelines to inhibit or prevent success, especially in the noted tendency of parents to *not* be liberal with praise. Another third of the pairs withdrew from the program.

Among those who discontinued the program there were two children whose parents have since sought the advice of specialists in regard to vision difficulty. The possibility of psycho-motor disabilities should not be overlooked whenever children have trouble with reading. A few children adamantly refused the program as a summer activity, and among these were two whose initial test results were well within their appropriate grade level. Various circumstances of families also contributed to the rate of discontinuance, which mainly involved children at the first and second grade levels.

Despite high levels of concern and the best intentions, many parents are obviously hampered in their efforts to help their children through lack of time, energy, understanding, or even patience and tenacity. They rely on school instruction more by default than by choice. In referring to parental concern, Dr. Morgan has called children's learning to read "the biggest hurdle after learning to become clean and dry". (p.14) This is no exaggeration. When children have difficulty with reading, parents worry. They want to help but often can not, do not know how, or even whether they should. The saddest conclusion is that many children are not helped, or helped very little.

Paired Reading can be very efficient and effective as a remedial technique, but it's success hinges on one-to-one tutoring of an extremely attentive and consistent nature. If parents as primary care-givers are frequently unable to devote daily time and attention to such a task, classroom teachers may be considered even less able. Even remedial programs in schools, with lower pupil/teacher ratios, rarely deliver this type of quality.

Children that are *disadvantaged* in learning to read, may continue to fill the "extra" minutes of their days with television, video games or similar entertainments, instead of books. But this need not be the outcome.

One case of substantial gain in this study (No. 13) has shown, by good fortune and no plan, that it need not be a *parent* who devotes a few minutes time each day to helping a frustrated young reader. This case suggests that good results could be achieved through the efforts of caring and conscientious volunteers, since it has the distinction of also being the case where the most generous praise was evident.

It is disconcerting to note that even among the cases where gains were substantial, there are only a few in which praise was frequent, however enthusiastic.

Furthermore, comments expressed by some parents in the daily records were often critically evaluative of the child's performance in the reading sessions.

The natural praise we bestow on children when they first make approximations at speech, stems from the trust we have that they *will* learn to talk. This natural tendency, to affirm and praise even approximations, apparently does not transfer to reading, no doubt because the same level of trust does not exist. Parents, themselves possessing strong feelings of identity with their children, may have difficulty putting their own anxieties aside enough to let their praise be spontaneous.

No child fails to make initial attempts. Everyone desires success. But when attempts continually meet with little success or encouragement, enthusiasm wanes. Paired Reading is without doubt a method that potentially offers any child, however disadvantaged, a real opportunity to learn to read. Some children may be helped at home by able and conscientious parents, for others alternate tutoring should be arranged.

A direction for further planning and study is therefore clear. Community volunteers may be enlisted to practice Paired Reading in programs running within or after school hours. Recruitment, coordination and supervision will entail costs, but this should be compared with the cost of other remedial programs. Early intervention with such an efficient method offers a promising solution to the problem of children struggling, becoming frustrated, and failing to develop as successful readers.

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Appendix A

WHAT IS PAIRED READING?

Adapted from:
"Paired Reading" by Keith Topping,
in *Child Education*, December, 1984

Many parents try to help their children with reading at home, in what they assume is the way teachers go about it in school. So they tell children to break up unknown words into letter sounds or letter names. This results in an over-emphasis on mistakes and a lack of concern for reading for meaning.

Paired reading is quite different. Parent and child read together at home on a "little and often" basis. The reading must only continue longer than fifteen minutes if the child insists. Discussion of the story and pictures at a natural break in the text is encouraged.

When the child gets a word wrong during paired reading, the parent just tells him or her what the word is. The child then repeats the word and the pair carry on. There is no struggling, nagging or fussing about errors. When the child gets words right the parent should smile, show pleasure and offer praise. While this sounds easy it often proves difficult to get used to.

Another feature of paired reading is that the child chooses the books to be read at home. Children are encouraged to choose reading material which interests them, from any source and at any level of difficulty. Obviously, children will try hard to read material they *want* to read.

Paired reading has two phases. The first is called "reading together". This is just as it sounds. Parent and child read all the words out loud together. The parent adjusts the speed so that the pair are reading in harmony. Each pair will develop its own sense of rhythm. Children aren't left to struggle with words for more than a few seconds. If the child doesn't say the word right the first time, the parent merely repeats it, ensures the child says it correctly as well, and they continue. Pointing to words as they are read can help make sure the child looks at them as well as listening to the adult. This phase of paired reading is used with children who have low levels of reading skills, or where a book has been chosen which is very difficult for the child. By reading together, with associated discussion, the child can extract the meaning from virtually any text.

As the child becomes more competent, or where the book is at the right level, the second phase of paired reading comes into play. This is "reading alone" or "solo". When the pair are reading together and the child feels confident enough, he or she might want to try reading a bit without the parent. When this happens, the child makes some pre-arranged, non-verbal signal to tell the parent to be quiet. The signal might be a knock, a sign or a nudge. At the signal, the adult immediately goes quiet and the child carries on reading out loud.

When the child fails to read a word correctly, or struggles with a word for more than a few seconds, the parent says the word, ensures the child repeats it correctly and the pair continue reading together. Reading together carries on until the child's confidence is built up once more whereupon he or she signals to read solo again and so on.

This method is even simpler in practice than it sounds. The main problem to overcome is unlearning old habits. While paired reading doesn't pretend to be any sort of cure-all, there is increasing research evidence showing its effectiveness. Children working on paired reading, together with school instruction, have made solid gains in word recognition, comprehension and reading fluency.

WHY PAIRED READING MAKES SENSE

Most children develop their speaking skills at an early age (two to three years) in the home environment with loving encouragement and the benefit of family as models. Parents and siblings and grandparents are usually delighted to hear the "baby" beginning to utter words or even approximations of words. Members of the family often enjoy coaching the very young child to say words correctly. If "baby" makes a grammatical mistake or mispronounces something, the mistake is not emphasized. More likely mistakes are ignored and the child is congratulated or praised for his or her effort while the correction is given.

Reading fluency can be developed in much the same way. Using the Paired Reading technique, a parent or other reading tutor can "model" the correct way to read: using appropriate expression, pausing for punctuation, and so on. Simultaneously the learner can practise reading without the frustration of stopping for unknown words and losing the meaning of the passage. The only acknowledgement necessary for a mistake or unknown word is that it be repeated accurately after the tutor. In this way the learner gradually develops familiarity with a larger and larger vocabulary.

Appendix B

SESSION PLANS FOR PAIRED READING

Adapted from: *Helping Children Read: The Paired Reading Handbook*,
Dr. Roger Morgan, Methuen, 1986
Adapted by A. Brailsford, Edmonton Public School Board

EXPLAIN TO YOUR CHILD:

- that you and he/she are going to try a way of reading together
- that it has helped many children to read better
- he/she can choose any book to read with you
- that you will help with hard words and he/she won't have to struggle if stuck
- that you'll always start reading together and will learn how to signal so that he/she can read a little on his/her own. The first sessions will concentrate on practising reading together, like singing a song together.

SESSION ONE

STEP 1. As soon as you're ready to start (you might say 1-2-3), put your finger on the first word as the signal to start together.

STEP 2. Start reading together, pointing to the words smoothly as you read.

***Tips:** Slow down if necessary
Read in unison, as a duet
Your child should read with you, not behind or ahead
Stop if you're out of rhythm and start at step 1
This may take a while to get right; relax!

Practice for a few minutes and then break to talk about the story. Try for 5-10 minutes on the first session.

SESSIONS TWO AND THREE:

Repeat Session One, practicing rhythm and working up to a full ten minutes of reading together.

SESSION FOUR:

STEP 1 and 2. Practice reading together as before
STEP 3. Discuss and try signalling.

- the child decides on a signal for reading solo. (Could be a tap on the table, a nudge, etc.)
- remind the child that he/she can signal anytime that he/she would like to read solo
- remind him/her that you will help anytime he/she is stuck.

Read together. If the child signals, **praise** the signal with a quiet "fine" or "good". (Accept the fact that the child may not want to signal at first, or may signal less on a harder book and more on an easier story.)

STEP 4. Allow the child to read solo.

Provide a lot of feedback and quiet praise such as "Good, yes, fine, uh-huh, that's right, great", etc. that doesn't interrupt the flow but shows your delight!

***Tips:** Keep your eyes on the print so you don't lose your place.
Encourage your child to smoothly point to the words as he/she reads.

****Important!**

If the child makes a mistake, point to the word, say the word, lift finger off and point again, thus signalling that you read the word together. Continue reading together.

If the child struggles with a word, allow 4 seconds to correct. After four seconds, point to the word, repeat it, lift finger off and point again, saying the word together and continuing to read together until the child signals to read solo again.

STEP 5. Continue the pattern of reading together (in duet), child signals, reading alone (solo) with a lot of steady praise, and reading together in duet again when there is a mistake or more than a 4 second "struggle". Take breaks whenever appropriate to comment on or discuss the story.

SESSION FIVE.

- Review signalling
- Always start by reading together
- Follow steps 1-5 from Session 4
- Increase reading time to approximately fifteen minutes each day.

Appendix C

PAIRED READING CHECKLIST

1. Use a book the child has chosen
2. Use a book suitable for the child's actual, rather than reading age
3. Do paired reading for a quarter of an hour each day
4. Always start off by "reading together"
5. While reading together, say each word at the same time as each other
6. Avoid stopping in order to see if the child can manage on his own
7. Point to each word with your finger to keep pace together, or better, let the child do the pointing
8. Point again to words that are not read properly together, and try again
9. Stop reading when the child signals, letting him/her carry on alone
10. Praise your child for signalling
11. Keep up a patter of praise/feedback while your child is reading alone correctly
12. Point out mistakes to give your child a second try
13. Avoid asking your child to sound words out
14. Start reading together again after four seconds if the child is stuck
15. Say together any word the child was stuck on
16. Keep reading together after coming in to help, unless and until the child signals.

LITERATURE BASED CO-OPERATIVE READING PROGRAM

Connie Barkase
Nanci Farrell

The purpose of this study is to determine whether partnering nine and ten year old students with four and five year old students for the purpose of reading for pleasure increases the appreciation of literature and the reading abilities of both groups.

Secondly, we wanted to discover if having parents read to or with their children on a daily basis would affect the children's appreciation for literature as well as their reading abilities.

Introduction

This study took place on the East Side of Vancouver, British Columbia. The school itself has been designated as an Inner City School and has many ethnic backgrounds. In this study, children from the following nationalities were in the two classes:

1. Vietnamese	12 students
2. Native Indian	8
3. Caucasian	6
4. Chinese	6
5. Philipino	4
6. Cambodian	3
7. East Indian	1 student
8. Polish	1
9. Greek	1
10. Czechoslovakian	1
11. Italian	1
12. Korean	1
13. Spanish	1
14. French	1

It is important to appreciate the context in which this study took place.

(1) Extremely low socioeconomic level of community

(2) High proportion of immigrant and refugee families in the area with non-English speaking backgrounds

(3) High rate of single parent families

(4) High rate of families on social assistance.

The academic level and social/emotional development of the students in this study are significantly lower than those of children in other areas of the city because of the factors noted above.

"Buddy" Selection

Buddy selection was determined by two factors; the cultural backgrounds of the students and their social skills. Many of the four and five year olds begin their schooling with minimal knowledge of the English language. The purpose of matching the children culturally was to enable older students to interpret to younger children in their native languages. We felt that, by doing this, comprehension and interpersonal relationships would be enhanced. It should be noted that all children were not matched culturally due to the variety of different backgrounds. Levels of social development were also taken into consideration so that emotionally incompatible students were not combined.

The children were observed for one month in their classroom settings before being grouped as partners. The theme "Sea" was chosen by the children as an area of study, with the understanding that students would choose their individual interest areas to research. Some examples are: starfish, crabs, turtles, boats, sharks, shells, and whales.

Family Dinner

Due to the nature and makeup of the community, parent involvement in this particular school is extremely low. To ensure a successful study, it was essential to inform the parents. By motivating and exciting the children about the program, we believed it would be passed on to the parents. A family dinner, prepared by the students, was the first "buddy" activity planned. The partners made formal invitations, place mats, and artwork to decorate the school's staffroom where the dinner was held. All students participated in the preparation of the meal, which consisted of salads, vegetarian lasagna, and cookies. The dinner was held for several reasons:

(1) To welcome parents into the school and to begin to develop a comfortable rapport

(2) To explain the purpose of the study

(3) To request the assistance of the parents in the study

(4) To introduce parents to their child's co-operative "buddy"

(5) To introduce parents to the School Board's interpreters, who are available to assist them in ongoing communication with the school and the community.

In explaining the purpose of the study to parents, four specific areas were discussed. They were:

(1) Importance of reading for pleasure
(2) Reading Passports
(3) Library Cards
(4) Questionnaires

Importance of Reading for Pleasure

Parents were enlightened regarding the importance of regular reading together with their children. Statistics and literature were made available at this time. Since Chinese and Vietnamese cultures do not traditionally read to children, interpreters stressed the correlation between reading together at home and academic achievement at school.[1] The interpreters made it clear to the parents that positive results could be obtained by reading in their native languages and that reading English was not essential.

Reading Passports

Each child received a "Passport to Reading".[2] Parents were encouraged to read with/to their children on a daily basis, even if only for five or ten minutes a session. Stories or books would be recorded in the passports and the passports brought to school. Individuals would be acknowledged each day for practising reading at home.

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[1] *Read Aloud Handbook*. Penguin Books. Markham, Ont. 1987.

[2] Appendix 1.

Library Cards

Public library card application forms were distributed to all parents. The forms were filled out with the assistance of interpreters and returned at the meeting to expedite the arrival of library cards, as well as the completion and return of the forms.

Reading Surveys

Parents were also asked to fill out a reading survey so that we were able to find out how many parents were currently reading with their children.[3] The survey also asked if individuals were willing to read with their children on a regular basis and to assist us in the study.

Visits to Community Library

On his visit to our school in June, 1990, we spoke to the community librarian of our plans to visit the library in the fall with our two classes. In September, arrangements were made to visit the community library about once every two weeks. Parents were encouraged to join the classes on their visits. Interest areas were covered by the librarian. These included sea books, use of the computer to locate books of interest (nine and ten year old students), routine of signing out books and looking for books suitable for each student's reading level. The students were encouraged to take out books to read at home and school and to visit the library on their own time with their parents or friends.

Nutrition Program - Cooking

The forty-seven children were divided into two groups. While one group did a nutrition activity involving cooking, the other group was involved in a literature based activity.

The nutrition program involved the students in the practical application of their reading based activities. These included:

(1) Reading each individual cooking recipe and becoming aware that the result was determined by accurate reading and measurement skills. The older students helped their younger buddies read over the recipes which included the metric measurement amount, the ingredients, and the procedure used to make the recipe.

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[3] Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

(2) Each student was given the opportunity to use the measurement cups and spoons to measure an ingredient accurately. This was done by taking turns and measuring the different ingredients from each recipe. Again, the older students assisted their buddies.

(3) Cooking skills such as mixing, stirring, grating, slicing, washing, and cleaning up were components of the cooking unit.

(4) Social responsibilities and development of group skills were emphasized with encouragement from the teacher.

(5) The recipes will be compiled to make a complete cook book which each student will take home at the end of the year. Recipes are also kept in the two classrooms for reading material and as references in the classroom libraries.

Literature Based Activities

Each student researched his or her area of interest and completed a fact book about his or her topic. While many nine or ten year olds completed extensive books, most of the four and five year olds simply drew pictures and learned and recorded four to six facts, with the assistance of their buddies. An individualized approach was used in recording for the younger children. While emergent writing was encouraged and incorporated by most children, some students wanted the correct spelling of words in these special books. The older "buddies" would write the facts and the younger children would copy the words into their books. Other students, with undeveloped fine motor skills, would simply trace over the older students' printing. All children practised their facts and were able to read their own books. Some students presented their books to the whole group and others chose to share with another "buddy" partnership.

Mural

Two "Sea" murals were made by the students. To a "background wash" were added paintings, drawings, and other creative artwork which was related to students' individual areas of interest. Facts and labels were added to the mural so that all children could share and learn.

Subtheme - Pumpkins

During the last two weeks of October, the students took time off the "Sea" unit and attention was focused on pumpkins. We felt it would be an interesting area for buddies to work together on to tie in the measuring, weighing and cooking that had been taking place in the nutrition area of our study. More importantly, a general student interest was going in the direction and excitement of Hallowe'en.

Students brainstormed what they knew about pumpkins and what they wanted to find out. We then chartered a bus and took a field trip to a pumpkin patch in Richmond, a farming community near Vancouver. Students had the opportunity to see the pumpkins in their natural environment. Each child returned to school with his/her own pumpkin. The following activities were done with co-operative buddy partners:

(1) Pumpkin study books. This included weighing, measuring, identifying parts of a pumpkin, and recording facts into the book

(2) Planting pumpkin seeds and graphing growth

(3) Cooking pumpkin seeds

(4) Carving pumpkins into jack-o-lanterns

(5) Baking pumpkin muffins

(6) Various forms of pumpkin art.

Books

Older students were encouraged to order books from scholastic book club. Every month students took the book order forms home for parents' viewing. Books were chosen and the order sent away. Books were also ordered by the Teacher for the classroom library, which allowed students who could not afford books to have reading material.

A selection of easy reading, pattern and big books was ordered for the younger children to establish a classroom library so that they would have easy access to books for the home reading program.

Assemblies

Every Friday, the school has an assembly in the gym for all the students and staff. The older students picked up their buddies from their classroom and accompanied them to the assembly. The older students served as excellent role models for the younger students in regard to listening skills, appropriate behaviour, and awareness of routines, such as standing for the singing of the national anthem.

Buddy presentations for the school assemblies included:

(1) Poem: Here is the Sea
(2) Poem: Finger Play -- Fish Alive
(3) Song: Baby Beluga
(4) Poetry Reading: written and read by the authors
(5) Display of art work relating to the Sea theme.

Buddy Reading in the Library

Every Friday for half an hour, the older students met their buddies in the library to assist them with (1) book exchange -- signing out a book to take home to read, and (2) oral reading a story with their buddy. The four/five year old chose a book and the partner to read it to him or her. At the end of the story the older student reviewed the ideas in the book. The older student would then record the title of the book they had read in the buddy's "Passport to Reading" booklet.

Field Trip - Aquarium

The climax of the Sea unit was a trip to the Vancouver Aquarium which included the Killer Whale show. All students did a whale fact book beforehand in order to make thoughtful connections to the presentation. During the aquarium tour, students were motivated to find an example of their specific interest study and to record observations of the live examples.

Pre- and Post-Reading Survey

In September, a reading survey was filled out by the parents. Forty-three parents indicated on the survey that they would participate in the study and would begin the Home Reading Program.

During the three month study, thirty-eight students kept their Reading Passports updated. Seven students did not. The reason for not participating appeared to be that the younger students were relying on their parents to assist in recording and returning the Passport. This was often overlooked and forgotten.

A post-reading survey was sent out in December. Results of the survey were very positive. Surveys indicated that all children and parents felt the reading program was a positive experience. Most participants read on a daily basis. Not all parents felt that their children's reading ability improved, but all participants agreed that interest in reading and literature had increased. All parents and children indicated that they wanted to continue after completion of the study.

Pre- and Post-Testing of Four and Five Year Olds

The four and five year olds were given two tests:

(1) Boehm Test of Basic Concepts, Revised. (Boehm R) Form C.

This test was designed to assess children's knowledge of fundamental basic concepts. The concepts measured by the test are relational concepts such as up, down, more, less, on top, largest, smallest. The concepts involve judgments that can be made regarding space, quantity, and time. They are essential to a child's thinking abilities and comprehension of language and literature.

Basic concepts present particular difficulty for special needs students. (Kavale, 1982; Canton, 1977). The research implies that children who start out behind in school achievement tend to stay behind. It also states that the gap between good and poor achievers increases over time. (Boehm, 1967; Davis, 1974). As a result, more focus is being directed to early childhood acquisition of these basic concepts. Early intervention programs, the Headstart program, and educational television programs (Sesame Street) are examples of this focus. On December 19, fifteen students were administered the post test of the Boehm Concept Test. The results are shown in Graph #1.[4]

Boehm raw score test results reveal that all children showed improvement in their understanding of basic concepts. It is interesting to note that the students with the least knowledge of English showed the greatest improvement in all cases but one. The one exception is a child with social emotional problems whose ability to concentrate varies drastically from day to day. This child showed the greatest improvement of all children tested. It is interesting to note that this individual was the only student to digress on the Peabody Test (see below).

Information regarding standardization, validity, reliability, and other technical data may be obtained from the test manual.[5]

(2) The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.

This test is used to measure vocabulary acquisition. Oral language has become a major focus in schools today and is considered a prerequisite for success in school achievement. The Peabody test is used as an initial screening for young children and is helpful in identifying students who may need special attention.

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[4] Appendix 4.

[5] Boehm Test of Basic Concepts - Revised. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc. Toronto, 1983.

Sixteen students were administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test on September 20, 1990. Fifteen children were re-administered the test on December 20, 1990. One child moved during this time. The results are shown in Graph #2.[6]

Peabody raw score results indicate that nine children showed improvement in the three month period. Four children did not get eight correct answers consecutively and therefore no basal level or raw score could be obtained. It is important to note that these four children had very little English language when they started school in September. Three of the children are Vietnamese and one is Polish. One child scored lower in December than in September. This individual has social emotional problems which may be a factor in her lower score as her ability to concentrate varies drastically from day to day. Information regarding standardization, validity, reliability, and other technical data may be obtained from the test manual.[7]

Pre- and Post-Testing of Nine and Ten Year Olds

The Canadian Achievement Test was given to the nine and ten year olds on September 24, 1990. This test combines both characteristics of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment. This enables the test to provide information about the relative ranking of an individual student against a norm group as well as providing specific information about the instructional needs of the student. The testing involved Test 1 - Reading Vocabulary and Test 2 - Reading Comprehension. The Reading Vocabulary test involved the identification of words with the same meaning, identification of words with opposite meaning, and the identification of multimeaning words by using sentence context.

The Reading Comprehension test requires the students to read a variety of literature which involved measurement of skills in literal, interpretive, and critical comprehension.

Re-testing occurred in December and the comparison of the results was noted.

These tests were administered again on December 11 and December 20, 1990. The Raw Score of each student's test was compared to the Grade Equivalent Table and the results recorded and compared.

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[6] Appendix 5.

[7] Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - Revised Edition. American Guidance Service. Circle Pines, Minnesota. 1981.

Fourteen students at Year 4 level were tested in September. Twelve were re-tested in December. Two were absent for the second testing. Six students' results improved from September, the range of improvement being from one month to nine months. Two students' results remained the same for September and December. Four students' results were lower in December than they had been in September.

Thirteen students at Year 5 level were tested in September. One student was absent at this time. Fifteen students were administered the test in December including two new students who had joined the class during the Fall term. Two were absent for the re-testing, including one new student who had not been tested before. Nine students' results improved from September. The range of improvement was from two months to three years 2 months. Three students' results were lower in December than they had been in September. The results are shown in Graphs #3 and #4.[8] Information regarding standardization, validity, reliability, and other technical data may be obtained from the test manual.[9]

Classroom Observations

Data Collections and Classroom Activities

Extensive analysis of the test results has not been compiled. While testing is often indicative of achievement and success in school, we believe, in accordance with the Year 2000 program in British Columbia, that other culturally unbiased methods are a better means of evaluating individual progress. Therefore, in addition to the testing, we began collecting data on individuals in regard to their progress in reading and their attitudes toward reading.

We conferenced with individuals on a regular basis. During this time samplings of students' writing and reading were discussed. Progress and change were recorded. Samples of students' writing and reading were dated and filed in individual folders. We also conferenced with parents and encouraged daily reading for pleasure at home. Finally, we proposed to reinforce our belief in the importance of reading through a comprehensive program of daily exercises involving books. These exercises included:

- practise carrying a book

- practise how to turn the pages of a book

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[8] Appendix 6 and Appendix 7.

[9] Canadian Achievement Test. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Ltd. Scarborough, Ontario. 1982.

- practise how to put a book away
- parts of a book (spine, cover, etc.)
- the importance of books and how they help us learn
- the enjoyment obtained by reading for pleasure
- daily D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything and Read) time, when the teacher also reads, acting as a model
- shared reading of four books each day, at the four/five year old level
- daily shared novel reading at the nine/ten year old level
- many books were followed up with related activities, although some books were read solely for the purpose of enjoyment
- daily journal writing (which involved emergent whole language approach at the four/five year old level)
- daily sharing of "Passports to Reading" which recorded books read at home with parents
- positive encouragement and reinforcement to all children demonstrating any interest in attempts to practise reading or to look at books.

It is also important to note that the teachers involved in this study chose to make books and reading the major focus during the three month period. Modelling a high regard for books and their care as well as an ongoing enthusiasm and excitement about reading were priorities.

Results of classroom observations, activities, and data collections were remarkable:

(1) A respect for the general care of books improved dramatically

(2) D.E.A.R. time became a part of the day all the children looked forward to

(3) Buddy Reading was anticipated weekly with enthusiasm. The older students' self-esteem, responsibility to the reading, and obligation to the younger students increased significantly

(4) Modelling of reading by the teachers, older students, and parents had a tremendous effect on the younger students' desire to read

(5) As a result of all the reading, journal and story writing in both classes increased and improved

(6) Daily acknowledgement and reward (stickers) for reading at home motivated other students to do so as well.

Analysis of Parent Involvement

Our objective of inviting the parents into the school for the initial family dinner meeting was overwhelmingly successful. In our combined twenty-two years at this school, neither one of us has ever had so many parents come to an event. We attribute the success to the following factors:

(1) The importance of having their parents attend was stressed consistently and positively by the teachers

(2) The students' involvement in preparing the meal appears to have been a major factor

(3) Our activities which included invitations, place mats, and artwork stressed the importance of the event

(4) The knowledge that interpreters of various languages would be attending helped to make parents with little or no English feel more comfortable about attending

(5) The welcoming of all family members made it easy for people to attend

(6) The students encouraged their parents to come so that they would be able to introduce their buddy to their parents.

This overwhelming turnout provided our study with a solid beginning. We believe that parents reading to and with their children is a key element in their children's success and interest in reading.

This implies that parents can have a key role in influencing and motivating their child's interest in literature and the practice of reading, thereby increasing the potential for success in the academics of schooling. It also implies that, in schools (such as the one used in this study) where parent involvement and interest are considered to be extremely low, a difference can be made. This difference, from our experience, stems from the teachers' enthusiasm, generated through daily discussion and motivation regarding events, which is passed on to the parents by the children.

Analysis of Co-operative Partners -- "Buddies"

Partnering older children with younger children had many advantages. The older children looked forward to reading with their smaller partners and took their responsibilities seriously. Older students who had weak reading skills gained a great deal of confidence as they were able to read the lower level books with ease and comprehension. Behaviour problems diminished during these sessions. We believe that the sense of responsibility and commitment to the younger students was the cause. Discussions regarding "role models" were held regularly and the older students developed a true understanding of this concept. They realized that the younger children looked up to them and would meet the expectations of their partners. Leadership qualities have started to emerge in many of the older, and often least expected, students. For many, it may have been the first time they were given responsibility because they were told that they were capable. The consistent, positive "I know you can do it" attitude that we, the teachers, consciously took on appeared to be of significance. Focusing on what the students could do and reinforcing positive behaviours resulted in a very pleasant atmosphere for all of us.

The younger students bonded immediately with their partners. They loved to be able to choose their own books and have them read just to them. They were delighted, during cooking sessions, to be shown how to use such utensils as knives, graters, and can openers and were thrilled to be able to use them independently. The individualized writing and practice reading sessions that evolved from "fact" books and reviews of recipes were invaluable. The pride and self-esteem that these four and five year old students experienced when reading their work to the class was very evident. Remarks such as; "I can read", "I wrote my own book", "I didn't know I was so smart", were ongoing.

Partners initially went to the hot lunch program together and the older students assisted the younger ones until they were familiar with the procedure and practice of carrying trays of hot meals. Many of them, to our surprise, continue to eat their lunches together.

Another unexpected event that has occurred is that partners tend to seek each other out at recess and lunch hour. This is often initiated by the younger students, who appear to be extremely proud to "know" an older child and are quick to tell anyone who will listen. "There's my buddy". What has amazed us even more is that the older children welcome the younger ones into their group. It is not often one observes different age groups playing together, and yet the four and five year olds are playing soccer, skip, and tag with the nine and ten year olds. Perhaps the best example of the bond that has formed between these two groups is the five year old who, responding to the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up"? answered, "I'm going to be a buddy".

Implications for Educational Practice

There are many implications for education practice. Young children, especially those beginning their schooling, are unthreatened by the older students and feel secure in the school environment once the buddy system is established. At the same time, a sense of social responsibility and nurturing becomes part of the older students' education.

Some professionals believe that valuable working and learning periods are taken away from older students when time is spent working with the younger children. Our experience has revealed that this is not the case. Self-esteem, confidence, and leadership qualities blossom in this co-operative learning environment. When these factors become part of the classroom surroundings they appear to have a profound effect on students' academic performance. In this study, older students were highly self-motivated to research their younger partners' interest area in the "Sea" study. They were told they were going to become the "teachers" of their partners. Many spent their recess and lunch hour in the library, finding appropriate books for their partners and researching their "buddies" topics. The developmental levels of all the younger children increased dramatically from the many hours of individualized instruction. Children enter school with individual experiences and knowledge. If we, as teachers, can tap into this prior knowledge and build on it, then connections to higher learning can be made. Use of the "buddy" system allows for such a process to take place. Rather than informing students that everyone is going to do a study on "whales", or "dinosaurs", students are asked to choose an area of interest to them. Prior knowledge is most often a factor in children's choices. Therefore students take on the learning task with a certain confidence and self-motivation because the topic is of genuine interest to them and they know something about it. This individualized learning through interest studies would be an overwhelming challenge for a teacher to take on alone. Use of the "buddy" system incorporates this learning style with relative ease. It also allows more time for the teacher to work with individuals, conference with students, and make classroom observations.

The educational implications for involving parents in their child's education cannot be overlooked. This study revealed the importance of welcoming the parents into the school at the beginning of the year in a non-threatening way. By acknowledging them as their child's first and ongoing teacher, by informing them of the school's philosophy and goals, by sharing information on a regular basis, and by requesting their support and assistance, communication is enhanced and their participation is more likely. They become actively involved in their child's education. By knowing what is going on in the classroom, parents can take an active role in furthering their child's knowledge at home. Modelling enthusiasm for learning and reading regularly with their child are two valuable examples of parent activity that can increase the child's appreciation and knowledge of literature. Parents, essentially, become partners in their child's education and the responsibility for student learning is shared.

Importance of Play

> *"Play is by no means a simple thing: it is, in fact, a very complex thing. It is the only activity in which the whole educational process is fully consummated: when experience induces learning and learning produces wisdom and character."*
>
> N. Scarfe,
> "Play in Education"

Another implication for education practice that arose quite unexpectedly from this study is learning through play. The early childhood classroom used in this study was set up using a centres approach, i.e.; water, sand, computer, math, writing. All centres had "challenges" for students in relation to some aspect of the "Sea". Although it is a well established notion that young children best develop their thinking and learning skills in this type of atmosphere, such practices diminish once students leave the early primary classrooms. In this study, nine and ten year old children flourished in the "learning through play" environment. Once required tasks were complete, partners had the opportunity to choose a centre. The higher skills level of the older children was fascinating to observe in this context. While it was apparent that they were learning through these experiences, it was a very natural example for the young children to make connections to more difficult tasks. Four and five year olds, for example, designed a relatively simple boat at the block centre. In the company of older children a sophisticated freighter was designed, incorporating materials from other centres. Lego for cabins, ladders, and life boats were added on. A flag was made at the imagination art centre and a swimming pool complete with water and plastic fish was added from the water centre. Labels were made at the writing centre and applied to various parts of the freighter.

Since September, the young children have been encouraged and challenged to become involved in more than one centre during activity time. It was not until older partners naturally demonstrated the possibilities that this began to happen regularly in the classroom. These experiences imply that play is a tool in which children of all ages can develop thinking through meaningful learning experiences.

Perhaps more importantly, these observations imply that there may be a great advantage to having children of various ages and skill levels in a classroom together on a regular basis.

Conclusion

One of our initial tasks was to discover if partnering older students with younger students for the purpose of reading for pleasure increased reading for enjoyment and reading abilities. As our study indicates, the overall answer to these questions is "yes". However, we found it difficult to isolate and focus on the chosen task exclusively. Many other activities were involved in promoting the topic including the multitude of unforeseen advantages that arose from partnering the students and which we felt also needed to be documented. We also found it difficult to pinpoint specific factors, for example that reading with a buddy increased the enjoyment of reading and improved reading levels. Looking back on our original proposal, there are aspects of the study we would change if starting again. The topic would have been more general and the study would simply have looked at partnering children for literature based activities without the specific focus on reading books. It would also have omitted the standardized testing which, for reasons previously mentioned, we did not find extremely helpful. More emphasis would be placed on methods of individual classroom observations, collections, student work folders, and teacher/student conferences, which provided us with tangible evidence of each child's growth and progress.

The second task proposed in this study was to discover whether or not parents reading to their children on a daily basis would have an effect on their children's appreciation of reading and if it would increase students' reading ability. We concluded that, indeed, parents' reading regularly to their children had a tremendous impact on students' interest and level of literacy. If doing the study over, however, our focus would have been different. The key to regular parent/child reading in an Inner City environment, from our experience, has been getting the parents into the school, acknowledging their worth, informing them, and maintaining communication. This is where most of our time and effort were spent. More focus would have been placed on "how to involve parents" rather than on the reading levels of the students. Without this solid foundation of communication we do not believe the study would have been as successful.

Students were required to take their reading passports home daily to record books/stories read at home. This caused ongoing problems at the four and five year old level. For those students who come from chaotic home environments there were ongoing losses of reading passports as well as books borrowed from school. In the final stages of the study this was resolved by having these students maintain one passport at school and one at home. They were restricted to signing out one book at a time and could not sign out another until the previous one was returned. Understandably, the parents of these children were also most difficult to maintain communication with. More effort would be placed on reaching this type of parent to enable them to assist with their child's development and to feel more comfortable with regular home school communication.

From a teaching point of view this study has been a valuable experience. It has motivated us to investigate the trends and changes in education. It has also stimulated us to reflect on our present teaching styles and to integrate new ideas. Personal growth has been enhanced through professional readings and co-operative team planning in a supportive and stimulating setting.

APPENDIX 1

PASSPORT
TO
READING

APPENDIX 2

September Reading Survey

Student's Name ______________________________

1. Does your child enjoy reading/looking at books, magazines, comics?

   Yes ______ No ______

2. Do you enjoy reading books/magazines? Yes ______ No ______

3. Do you share/read with your child on a regular basis? Yes _____ No ______

> "Writing begins long before the marriage of pencils and paper. It begins with sounds, that is to say words and simple clusters of words that are taken in by small children until they find themselves living in a world of vocables. If that world is rich and exciting, the transition to handling it in a new medium - writing - is made smoother. The first and conceivably the most important instructor in composition is the teacher, parent, or older sibling who reads aloud to the small child."

- Clifton Fadiman, from Empty Pages: A Search for Writing Competence in School and Society.

4. Would you be willing to assist us with a study and read to/with your child for five-ten minutes three to four times a week until December? Yes _____ No _____

5. Would you be willing to record the times and books shared/read together if you received a book diary to assist you? Yes _____ No _____

At the conclusion of the study in December, we will be happy to share the results with you.

APPENDIX 3

December Reading Survey

Thank you for participating in our Home Reading Program. We hope you will be able to take some time and fill in this post-reading survey to complete our literature study.

1. Did your child bring home reading material to share with you?

   Yes _______ No _______

2. Did your child take the initiative to read on their own in their spare time?

   Yes _______ No _______

3. How often was reading done at your home?

   Daily _____ Once a Week _____ Twice a Week _____ Other _____

4. Did you notice an improvement in your child's reading ability over the time?

   Yes _______ No _______

5. Did you notice an improvement in your child's attitude to reading for pleasure/recreation? Yes _____ No _____

6. Do you have any concerns or comments?

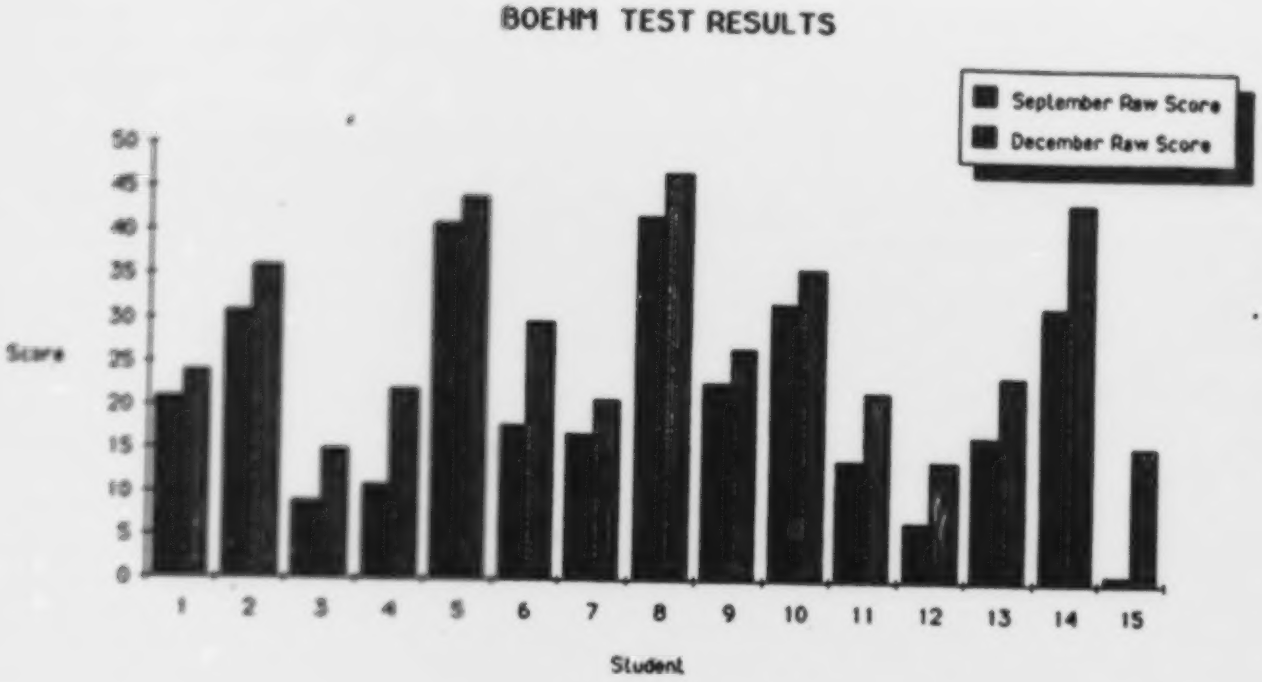
   ____

   ____

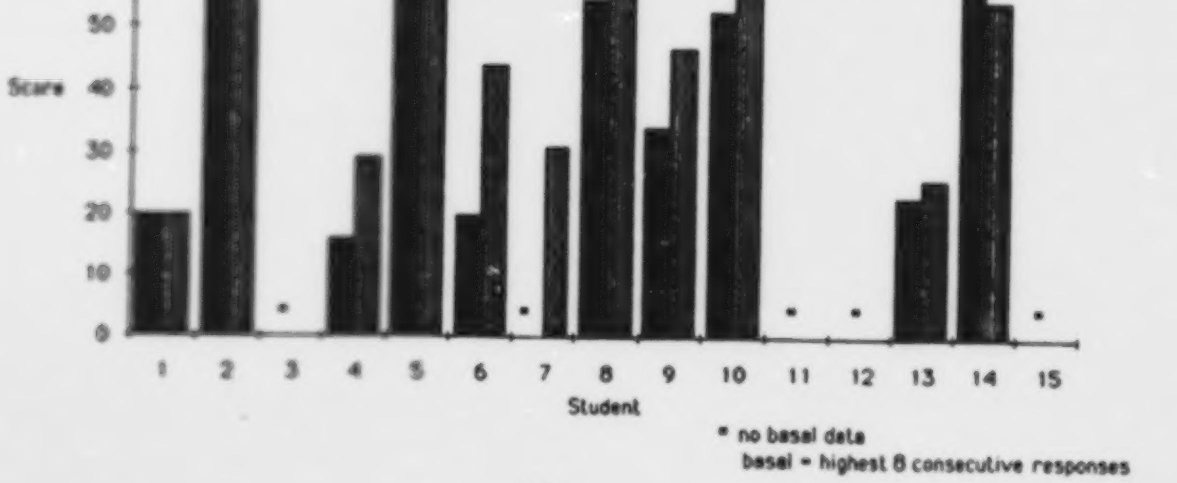
7. Do you think the Home Reading Program should be continued after the Christmas break? Yes _______ No _______

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this form. We appreciate your assistance. Please send the form back to the school as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 4
Graph #1

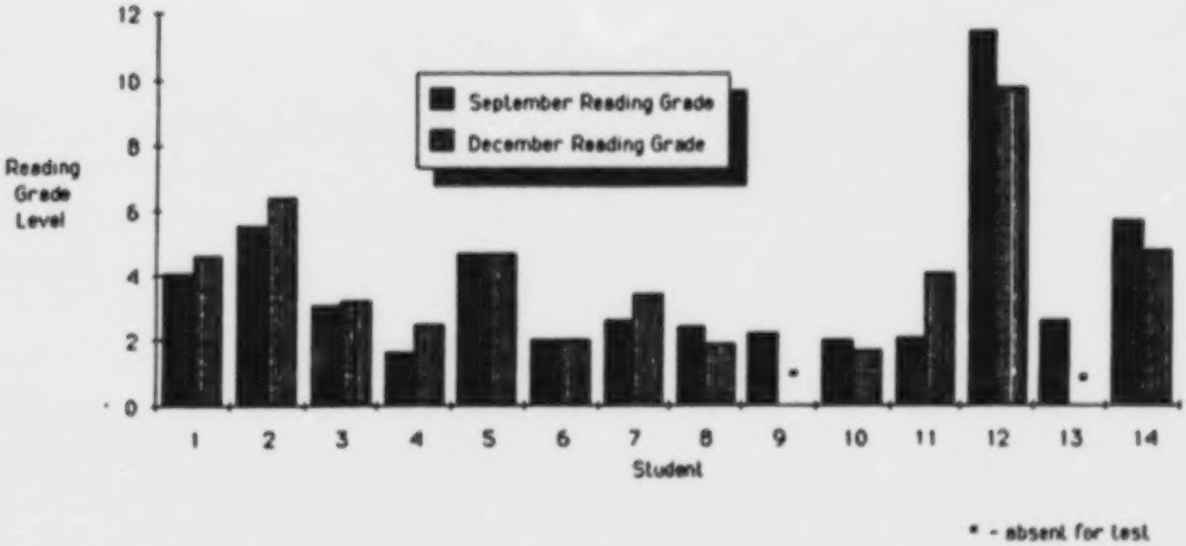


APPENDIX 5
Graph #2



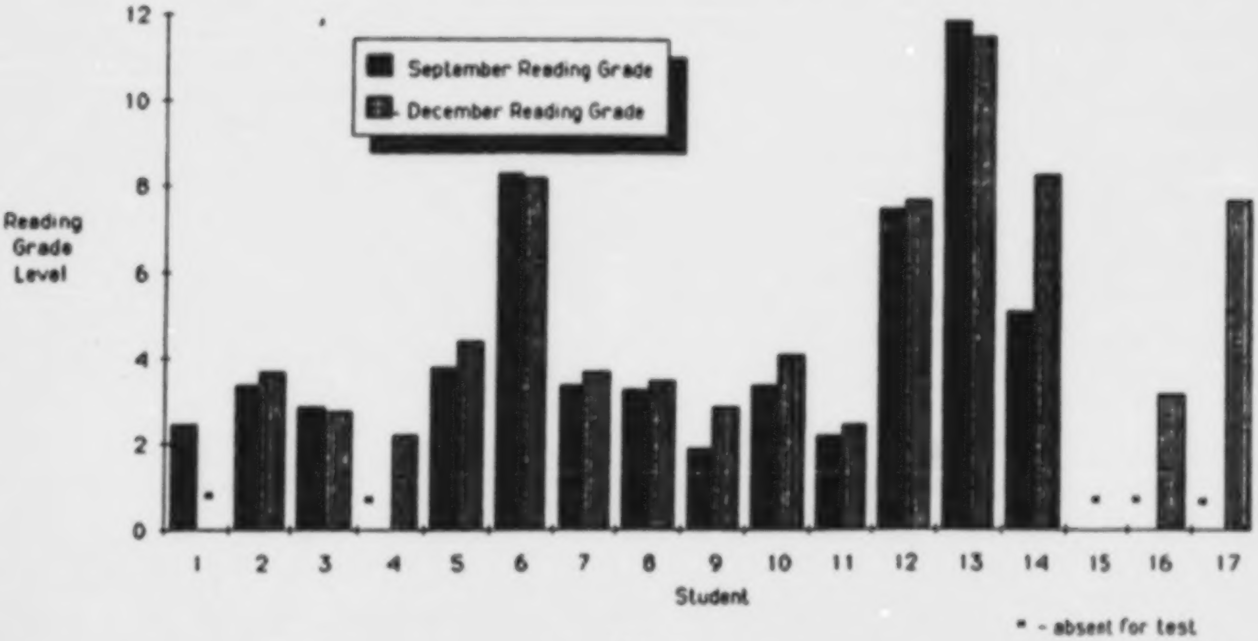
APPENDIX 6
Graph #3

CANADIAN ACHIEVEMENT READING TEST
Grade 4 Class



APPENDIX 7
Graph #4

CANADIAN ACHIEVEMENT READING TEST
Grade 5 Class



PAIRED READING IN PORTAGE: HOW PARENTS MADE A DIFFERENCE

Catherine M. Hoover

International Literacy Year has drawn to a close. The aim, according to a UNESCO news release, was to "put literacy high on the world development agenda" and to "set in motion a worldwide movement for literacy as a ten-year Plan of Action". Carl Braun, President of the International Reading Association, reminds us that it is now time to look at the action beyond 1990. Writing in *The Reading Teacher* of December 1990, Braun speaks of three issues which he feels are central to the movement to promote world literacy. The first is the area of adult literacy, the second is the prevention of illiteracy and the third, another preventative imperative, involves educators' continued involvement in working with families. He writes, "We have long recognized the key role played by the family in literacy development, particularly in shaping children's attitudes toward reading and writing".

Indeed, virtually every author writing on the subject of emerging literacy impresses on parents the importance of their role. In Dolores Durkin's 1966 study of early readers, every one of the seventy-nine children had been read to regularly. In addition, the parents were avid readers and led by example. More recently, in the United States, the Commission on Reading (1985) in its landmark report called *Becoming a Nation of Readers* concluded that, "Parents play roles of inestimable importance in laying the foundation for learning to read" and, "Parents have an obligation to support their continued growth as readers". (p.53)

Although a parent may wish to become involved in a direct way with helping the child learn to read better at home, he/she may be cautious or confused, uncertain as to what is the best way to provide this help. As Rasinski and Fredericks state, "Even highly motivated parents may feel over-loaded with the variety of literacy activities from which they can choose". (p. 508)

Since reading is the targeted skill, parents may well decide to attempt some form of supported reading at home. The term "supported reading" is being used to describe a variety of activities in which the parent and child may engage. These might include reading a child a story first and then having the child read it to the parent; listening to the child read and helping him/her with difficult words and passages; following a "you-read-a-page-and-I'll-read-a-page" format; or echo reading. In this process, the parent reads a sentence or phrase, pausing at the natural breaks in the longer sentences, and the child repeats or "echoes" the same words. But there is still another type of supported reading which is currently receiving considerable attention -- this is the technique of paired reading.

This approach capitalizes on parent and child reading together at home for a specified period each day using a two-phase technique. Over the past five years particularly, paired reading has been the subject of much interest and experimentation, in Great Britain especially. The method sounds amazingly simple to learn and use, yet is reportedly very effective in improving children's reading accuracy and comprehension. This combination of characteristics made it a tempting choice as a parent involvement scheme for the students of our School Division.

Support for an experiment with its use came in the fall of 1990 in the form of a literacy research grant from the Canadian Teachers' Federation. "Paired Reading in Portage: Can Parents Make a Difference?" -- this was the title of the research proposal and the question we set out to answer.

PAIRED READING: A PROMISING ALTERNATIVE

Paired reading is one of the many strategies that utilizes the potential of parents, their children and schools. According to Peter Pumfrey of the University of Manchester, it does so in a specific way for sound theoretical reasons. Also, he states, "The technique, in effect, extends the time per day that the pupil spends on learning to read". (p. 89) Further, paired reading emphasizes fluency in reading, the use of context and comprehension.

Morgan and Lyon (1979) described this method as being largely based upon behavioral learning theory whereby "correct reading responses may be acquired" as well as "increasing the probability of performance through reinforcement". But as Bloom suggested, "The benefits and gains from this method seem to be psycholinguistic rather than purely mechanical, because the model of reading underlying it is holistic rather than skills-based". (1987, p.89, as cited in Johnson, p. 355)

But enough of the theory behind it -- how exactly is it done? Paired reading, sometimes known as the impress method, has several variations. The technique taught to the parents in this project was as it was described by Topping (1987) in *The Reading Teacher*.

It begins with the child choosing the reading material, irrespective of its level of difficulty. This, Topping notes, is a novel feature but one which ensures high interest on the child's part and besides, "most children become quickly skilled at choosing their own books". (p. 609)

Here is what happens as the two begin the paired reading session:

> During the difficult text, the child is supported by the parent and child reading together -- both read all the

> words out loud together, with the parent adjusting speed to achieve synchrony. The child must say every word correctly. Where the child makes an error, the adult merely repeats the word until the child reads it correctly. When encountering easier sections of text, the child makes some prearranged nonverbal signal to tell the parent to be quiet. This signal might be a knock, a nudge, or a squeeze. The child continues reading alone until an error is made, when the same correction procedure is applied, and the pair revert to reading together. There is much emphasis throughout on praise for correct reading, self correction, and signalling to read alone. (Topping, 1987, p. 609)

There are a number of desirable features related to this type of supported reading. The reading together aspect and the readily available support free many children from word-by-word decoding and this, in turn, enables them to read much more fluently with much greater consciousness of contextual cues. There is much praise built into the method and parental criticism is virtually eliminated. Children can learn not only accurate oral reading but also expressiveness, pacing and attention to punctuation. Also, involvement in a paired reading project increases the amount of sheer reading practice the children get. And it gives them some peaceful private attention from their parents which may not otherwise be available.

What does the research state regarding the efficacy of the paired reading technique? Morgan and Lyon (1979) found gains in reading accuracy ranged from 7 months to 19 months progress in 6 months. There was a similar average gain for comprehension but not for spelling performance.

Between 1981 and 1984 the paired reading technique was introduced to 76 of the most seriously failing readers in a junior school in Derbyshire and their parents. The projects generally lasted between 6 and 8 weeks. The progress made was "three times the 'normal rate' in reading accuracy ... and six times in comprehension." (Miller, 1986) As the author emphasized, these improvements were even more significant when it was remembered that the children involved were considered to be seriously failing with reading. Also, as with other projects involving parents, great enthusiasm was generated among both the parents and children who took part.

In 1986 Keith Topping compiled a bibliography on this subject. His listing contains over 100 studies of paired reading and also attempts to summarize their findings. He reported that, "Evaluation studies show that children involved in Paired Reading on average make 3 times normal progress in reading accuracy and 5 times normal progress in reading comprehension". (quoted from Topping, 1987, p. 615)

There is also a social aspect to such a home reading program which is not to be overlooked. One researcher in Scotland feels that, "The actual physical proximity of the child and adult while reading somehow fosters a strong emotional bond between the two. Parents have commented on the strengthening of their relationship with their child; children I interviewed said they thought their mother liked them better now that they were reading together". (Stewart, 1989)

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether participation in a parents-as-partners paired reading program could have a beneficial effect on the developing reading skills of grade 2 and 3 students in Portage la Prairie. Also to be investigated were the students' attitudes toward reading and books as well as the parents' perceptions of the child as a reader.

Before beginning this study, the researcher specified the information to be sought by posing the following questions:

1) Would the paired reading group make gains in reading age (or grade equivalent) on the standardized reading measure that would be *greater* than normal improvement, i.e. more than exactly proportionate to the passage of time? Two aspects of reading -- vocabulary, a measure of reading accuracy, and comprehension, understanding what was read -- would be tested and analyzed separately.

2) Would these gains be greater than those made by the control or comparison groups? If so, to what degree?

3) Would these gains be as great as those claimed by the British researchers? That is, an average of 3 times normal progress in reading accuracy and 5 times normal progress in reading comprehension.

4) Would the parents and children find the method easy to learn and practise and would they find the system motivating enough to sustain their interest for two months? Also, would there prove to be some children for whom the method would be unsuitable on the basis of particular learning style or temperament?

5) What changes, if any, would the parents observe in the reading abilities of their son/daughter?

6) What changes, if any, would the parents observe in their son's/daughter's attitudes toward reading?

7) Would the parents, based on their experiences in this program, be willing to recommend the method to friends or relatives who wished to help their child with reading?

RESEARCH DESIGN

A group of 45 parents of grade 2 and 3 students from the city schools of Portage la Prairie, Manitoba agreed to take part in a parents-as-reading-partners paired reading program. The program offered parents the chance to help their children improve their reading skills and to share with them the job of reading. The children were referred for the program by their regular classroom teacher.

The parents attended an organizational meeting at the end of September, 1990 at which they:

1) had the paired reading technique explained and demonstrated (via a videotape)

2) learned about the possible benefits which could result from using the method with their child

3) listened to an explanation of the obligations of the participating families

4) had a chance to sign a "contract" if they wished to join the paired reading program.

The reading abilities of the 45 students whose parents had agreed to participate in the program were initially assessed by use of a widely-used, Canadian-normed, standardized measure. For the grade 2 students, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (Level A, Form 2) was administered and for the grade 3 students, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (Level B, Form 2) was given. There then followed the two-month home reading method, four or five times a week for ten to fifteen minutes per session. Records of these sessions were kept in a reading log. After two months (roughly the months of October and November) the students were reassessed using Form 1 of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test at the same level as in the fall. The parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding the program and their child's response to it, noting particularly any changes in reading abilities and confidence levels. The reading logs were also collected by the researcher for analysis, but were to be returned when the post-test results were shared with the parents in January, 1991.

Two control groups -- one of grade 2 students and one of grade 3 students -- were also identified. These students were, in every case, drawn from the group of students whose parents had been offered the opportunity of joining the paired reading group, but who had chosen not to. Unlike the two experimental groups which had grade 2's drawn from nine different classes in six schools and the grade 3's which were drawn from eleven different classes in seven schools, the grade 2 control group consisted of sixteen students *from the same class* and the grade 3 control group consisted of fourteen students *all in another class.* The two control groups were located at different schools. The students in the control groups were assessed at the beginning of October and the beginning of December using the same instruments as the experimental groups.

THE HOME READING PROGRAM

The first step in publicizing the program was taken in June 1990, when letters were sent to the principals of the seven schools from which participants were to be sought. The purpose of the letter was to inform the principals that the home reading program and study would be conducted in the fall of the year. Letters were also sent to the teachers of the grade 2 and 3 classes in the same schools.

It was decided that the classroom teachers would be in the best position to recommend students who could benefit from the program. Consequently, after getting permission from each of the principals to solicit participants from their school, eight copies of the goldenrod-coloured flyer were sent to the grade 2 and 3 teachers in the target schools along with a memo reminding them about the project and asking them to send these flyers home with the students in their class who were currently reading below the level expected for their grade. Further, the teachers were asked to forward to the researcher the names and phone numbers of the students for whom they were recommending the program. The number of teachers involved at this stage was 23 -- eleven at the grade 2 level and twelve at grade 3. These teachers were also invited to duplicate the parent flyer if they wished to send home more than the eight provided, including the possibility that they might wish to offer the program to their entire class. Copies of the parent flyer were also placed in the city library and the local children's book store.

The parent flyer invited the families to attend a "parent information evening" on September 25th to be held in one of the city schools. As soon as the flyers went home, the researcher began to get calls from interested parents. Some wished to learn more about the program in order to decide whether or not to attend the meeting; others called to say that they were interested in taking part but would be unable to attend on the 25th. Arrangements were made to provide these families with the same information as those who could attend.

On the night of September 25th, the parents (either one or both) of about 40 students turned out for the meeting. Also attending were about eight to ten classroom teachers and resource teachers in the Division who came to learn more about the program.

As the parents entered the room for the information session, they were handed a copy of the mini-brochure on the project which is written in question and answer format. The order of the researcher's presentation was: explaining about paired reading and the research which shows its effectiveness; playing the videotaped demonstration of the researcher using the method with two students; explaining the set-up of the program itself and finally, distributing the contracts which the participating families would be asked to sign if they chose to commit themselves.

An experimental group of between 30 and 35 students was initially hoped for. By the end of the parent meeting, the researcher had collected 40 signed contracts and once the non-attenders had been signed up, the size of the home reading group had grown to 45! The group was comprised of 23 grade 2 students and 22 grade 3 students; there were 27 boys and 18 girls. There were students from all seven of the target schools and 20 out of the 23 possible classes.

The reading assessments were carried out over a number of days, ranging from Friday, September 28 to Thursday, October 4. With the permission of the classroom teacher and the assistance of the school's resource teacher, the assessments took place, in all but one case, in the students' own school during school hours. In the case of the student who was the only participant in her school, the assessment took place in her home in the evening.

At the close of the assessment session, each child was provided with his/her reading log. The reading log also contained a page giving the parents the starting and ending dates of the home reading part of the program. It also returned to them the original contract they signed at the meeting, now also signed by the researcher (who kept a photocopy for her own records). Each student was also given the first of a series of small incentives which participants earned by continuing in the program. In this case, the incentive was a "Make Friends with Books" button.

The parents were invited to contact the researcher at any time throughout the duration of the project if they had any questions or concerns. In fact, very few contacts were initiated by the parents. In the third week of the home reading period, the researcher contacted every participating family by means of an evening phone call.

During the eight and one-half week home reading period, the researcher composed three newsletters and distributed them to the participating families. The means of distribution was via the child's classroom teacher and the courier service which links the schools. The purpose of these newsletters was to encourage the families to keep up their interest and involvement in the project, to provide some more information about paired reading, to suggest reading materials which might be of interest to the children, and to advise the parents of news regarding the administration of the program (e.g. re-test dates, etc.) The first two newsletters also contained more incentives for the youngsters. Newsletter #1 included a plastic book bag for the grade 2 readers and bookmarks for the grade 3's. Newsletter #2 had on the backs a listing of the Caldecott Award-winning children's books since 1938.

Within four days of the end of the home reading period, the researcher returned to all of the participants' schools to administer the post-test. The pre- and post-tests were administered on the same day of the week, on the same day of the school cycle, at the same time of day, and (in all cases except that of three students) in the same room. Although this situation came about by chance, it was very desirable from the standpoint of consistency of testing conditions. In other words, one would not wish to compare a child's results on, for example, a Monday morning with his achievement in the last class on a Friday afternoon.

The parents had been asked to see that their child brought the reading log with them to the re-assessment session. Many remembered to bring it but about one-third of them had to be returned to the researcher via the courier system. The parents had been informed via the newsletter that in order to qualify for the project completion bonus, the child would have to have a minimum of 34 paired reading sessions recorded (i.e., 4 sessions per week times the 8½ weeks of home reading). Once the researcher had examined the log and verified that the child was eligible, this bonus of $3.00 worth of children's book store gift certificates was presented to the child -- in person if he/she had brought the log to the re-test session or via the courier if the log was received later. Each child was also presented with a certificate stating that he/she had indeed "Made Friends With Books", echoing the message stated by the buttons.

At the post-testing session each child was given an envelope to take home to his or her parents. This envelope contained a copy of the parent questionnaire and a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher. The questionnaires were all distributed by Friday, December 7, the same date as the last post-testing session. Over the next couple of weeks, the completed questionnaires arrived in the mail. Thus the data collection part of the study was completed and the analysis of the results then began.

RESULTS

A. Changes in Sample Sizes

As mentioned in earlier sections of this report, the starting numbers of the project were:

Grade 2	Grade 3
Experimental Group = 23	Experimental Group = 22
Control Group = 16	Control Group = 14

By the close of the project (the first week in December) the numbers were:

Grade 2	Grade 3
Experimental Group = 22	Experimental Group = 18
Control Group = 16	Control Group = 13*

* The change in the size of the grade 3 control group was due to one student's moving away during the period of the study.

As the numbers for the two paired reading groups above reveal, by the closing date of the project, 40 families remained, making the completion rate for the project almost 89% (40 out of 45).

One family discontinued after trying the method for about a week and a half. The youngster's mother reported that he simply did not like the paired reading method and refused to practise it with her. He was happy to listen to stories read to him or to read aloud to his mother but he would not put up with "butting in", as he called it. We had no alternative but to drop him from the program.

Two other students did not finish the program because specific family circumstances did not allow for them to carry on with regular home reading. The remaining two individuals who did not complete the program were students at the researcher's own school. The reasons for their non-completion were not communicated to the researcher.

There is one factor which seems highly related to non-completion of the program; that is non-attendance at the organizational meeting. The starting number of 45 participants included five families which were not represented at the initial meeting. Three of the five families were non-completers of the program, making the drop-out rate of the non-attenders 60%, as opposed to the project's overall drop-out rate of only 11%. Further, in only one case did a student fail to complete the program when his mother or father did attend, making a project completion rate for meeting-attenders of almost 98% (39 out of 40). It is not possible to conclude, of course, that non-completion of the program is caused by non-attendance at the meeting. It may simply be that these families were less committed to the program and that non-attendance of the organizational meeting is simply an indicator of this. At any rate, for a person contemplating further projects of this kind, the message seems clear -- parental attendance at any organizational sessions appears to be critical and should be encouraged -- or insisted upon -- in all cases.

B. Statistical Results

The statistical results, including average group test scores and amount of growth, are summarized in Table 1.

C. Descriptive Results

1. Reading Logs

The reading logs of all 40 families who completed the project were collected by the researcher for analysis. The participating families had been asked to record the date of each paired reading session along with the book title (and pages if part of a book was read) and the name and initials of the adult partner. They were also invited to make comments if they wished regarding anything about the session such as how the child read, whether or not the book was suitable, etc.

Table 1.
Statistical Results

Grade 2

Paired Reading Group (n = 21)
Average test scores of group

	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Amount of growth in 2 months
Vocabulary	1.5	2.0	5 months
Comprehension	1.6	2.0	4 months
Total test	1.6	2.0	4 months

Control (or Comparison) Group (n = 16)
Average test scores of group

	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Amount of growth in 2 months
Vocabulary	1.3	1.5	2 months
Comprehension	1.4	1.5	1 month
Total test	1.4	1.5	1 month

Grade 3

Paired Reading Group (n = 18)
Average test scores of group

	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Amount of growth in 2 months
Vocabulary	2.4	2.5	1 month
Comprehension	2.3	2.8	5 months
Total test	2.3	2.7	4 months

Control (or Comparison) Group (n = 13)
Average test scores of group

	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Amount of growth in 2 months
Vocabulary	2.7	2.8	1 month
Comprehension	2.7	2.8	1 month
Total test	2.7	2.8	1 month

N.B. All test scores are expressed in grade equivalents.
See page 139 for details of tests used.

The average number of sessions recorded by the 40 families was 42. Altogether the families logged 1,683 paired reading sessions!

The variety of ways in which the logs had been kept made these records an interesting set of data in themselves. Some adults had used the log strictly as a record-keeping device with only dates, books and pages entered. Others added useful observations and insights as to the child's progress or the paired reading method itself. Here are some actual examples from the reading logs*: "Had trouble with some of the longer words". And from later in the same child's reading log, "Reading is improving in this book. Jacob needs less help with the words than when we started this book". From the records of a grade 2 student, dated October 28, "Good reading -- is beginning to be more sure of herself", and November 9, "Jessica is attempting more words than she would at the start". And this from another grade 2 girl's log, "Karen enjoyed the fact that she was reading a chapter book. She also enjoyed the story even though some of the words were quite difficult". Some parents commented on the types of books the youngsters were choosing, as in this entry dated November 7, "Choosing longer and harder books, some even with no pictures!" The growing interest of the young readers can be gauged by some of the comments such as, "Jimmy offered to read a second book with a 'please, mom'?" Some entries commented on progress noted that was apart from paired reading times, e.g. "Reading much better. Reads things on her own now like menus, T.V. messages".

Parents' skills at observing and describing their children's progress were evident in such comments as this one: "Kyle read with lots of intonation, not much difficulty with reading and sounding out words. Notices now when he misreads a word, because it's out of context".

A few parents wrote summary or "wrap-up" comments after the last entry, as in this one dated December 3: "Paul's reading has really improved over the 2 months. He will often pick up a book and read to himself now. Thank you so much for your interest and assistance". And in one case, the student, a grade 3 boy who made quite remarkable gains over the course of the two months, had the last word:

> "I had 43 lessons.
> I LOVE IT!
> (signed)
> November 28, 1990
> Thank you.

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* Note that the children's names used in this report are all fictitious.

2. Parent Questionnaire Results

Forty questionnaires were distributed at the time of the students' re-assessments. The number returned to the researcher was 32, making a completion rate of 80%.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first three questions were in the section called "The Paired Reading System & You". Here are the questions and a summary of the responses:

1) How easy/difficult was it for you to learn the Paired Reading method?

Thirteen (40%) said it was "very easy" and 15 (47%) said it was "easy". Four (13%) said they had "some difficulty" and none said they had "considerable difficulty" learning the method.

2) How easy/difficult was it for you to teach your child how to use the Paired Reading method with you?

Eleven (34%) parents said that they found it "very easy" and another 11 said it was "easy" while, in this case, 10 parents (32%) of the responding group said they "had some difficulty" teaching the method to their child. None reported having "considerable difficulty".

3) Please state what non-verbal signal your child used as the signal for you to stop reading with him/her.

A whole range of different signals were mentioned, from touching the parent's arm to raising a finger from the page, to knocking on the table. No respondents left this question blank. The reason for including it was to gain some assurance that the paired reading method, as it had been taught, was indeed used by the families. Because limited time for the project precluded home visits, direct observation of the reading sessions was not possible.

Under "Administration of the Program", questions 4-8 were posed:

4) In terms of understanding what was expected of you in this program, how helpful was the parent information meeting on September 25th?

Twenty-seven parents (84%) said the meeting was "very helpful", 2 (6%) said it was "somewhat helpful", 1 (3%) said it was "not particularly helpful" and 2 (6%) did not attend the meeting.

5) In terms of understanding the Paired Reading Method, how helpful was the videotape demonstration?

Twenty-four (75%) stated that the videotape was "very helpful", 7 (22%) said it was "somewhat helpful" and one mother who came late to the meeting, did not view it.

6) How helpful were the phone call(s) to/from the researcher?

Nine parents (28%) answered that the phone calls were "very helpful"; 19 (59%) stated that they were "somewhat helpful"; 2 (6%) answered with "not particularly helpful" and 2 parents could not recall having phone contact with the researcher.

7) Three newsletters were sent out during the term of the project. How many did you receive?

This question was included to learn whether the distribution system (from researcher, via courier, to classroom teacher, to child and finally, home) was working properly. Apparently it was because 28 (or 88%) of the parents remembered receiving 3 newsletters, 2 (6%) received two of them and 2 parents did not answer the question.

8) How helpful/interesting were the newsletters to you?

Seventeen parents (53%) circled that the newsletters were "very helpful/interesting" and 15 (45%) chose "somewhat helpful/interesting".

The second part of question #8 solicited comments regarding the administration of the program. Parents offered a variety of positive comments regarding the administration. Examples are: "It was organized and well done"; "researcher approachable"; "carried out very well"; "researcher seemed attentive and responsive". There were mentions, however, of ways in which the administration could have been improved. One mother, for example, suggested that the youngsters be able to view the videotape themselves. Indeed, this idea has been mentioned by other organizers of paired reading programs. Another request was for "more contact by phone" and other parents stated that they "expected more personal contact and direct monitoring". This wish was perhaps best expressed by the Mom who wrote, "It would have been nice (but not really necessary) to have had someone look in on us, just to say 'you're doing fine' or 'maybe you could try this', especially in the beginning when we were a little unsure".

Questions 9 - 11 were from the section called "Results with the Child".

9) To what extent, if at all, do you feel your child's reading has improved in the past two months?

Four parents (14%) stated they had observed "a very great improvement" in the child's reading; 20 (63%) noted a "good improvement", 7 (22%) thought the child's reading was "slightly improved"; and one parent whose son disliked the paired reading system -- particularly at the end of the project -- circled "no improvement I can observe".

The parents who thought their child's reading had improved over the past two months were asked to circle ways in which the improvement was noted (and to circle as many as applied in their situation). The choice "showing more confidence in reading ability" was picked most often with 25 or 78% of the parents making this observation. "Figuring out harder words" was noted by 24 or 75% of the respondents. "Reading more fluently" was a trait that 22 or 69% of the parents noted. Twenty-one or 66% of the parents stated that their child was now "reading with more expression". "Choosing harder books" was noted by 18 or 56% of the adult reading partners as a way the child's reading maturity evidenced itself. When it came to "observing punctuation" and "making fewer errors or 'miscues'", in both cases 17 or 53% of the parents said their child had improved in these areas. The last choice "understanding what was read" was selected by 15 or 47% of the parents.

Of course, circling comments which have been written by someone else cannot tell the whole story of something as complex as learning to read. For this reason, the parents were invited to make their own comments regarding the child's reading skills. Sample comments from this section are: "improved a lot in confidence"; "I have witnessed lots of wonderful things throughout this program"; "performance varied from day to day depending on how tired she was"; "improved very much in all areas -- laughs at funny parts -- uses better intonation". There were cautious notes sounded as well, such as: "work still needed on knowing what was read" and "she still has a way to go".

10) Do you perceive any changes for the better in your child's attitude toward reading?

"Yes, definitely" answered 13 or 41% of the parents; the same number responded "somewhat changed"; 3 or 10% saw "no change at all"; the mom of the student who disliked paired reading responded with "a change for the worse", but added, "this is with paired reading only; he still likes silent reading"; and 2 parents, who said their off-spring had always been excited about reading, did not answer the question.

Five possible indicators of increased interest were offered. Here are the number of times they were chosen: "More interested in books in general" and "more willing to read on own (not at paired reading time)" were both selected by 20 or 63% of the parents. Fourteen or 44% of the adults said that the child had "developed favourite books, series or authors". Five parents (16%) said that the child now "talks about books or recommends books to others". "More interested in borrowing library books or buying books" was observed by 15 or 47% of the parents.

When given the chance to comment on changes in the child's attitude toward reading, the parents recorded notes as personal and varied as the students who had taken part. Space permits including only a few, but the comments are extremely encouraging in terms of the benefits of the program. Here are some examples: "Will now pick up a book when on his own"; "I seldom hear 'I'm bored' anymore. Susie curls up with a book"; "She doesn't complain as much or at all now when she has to read. Also, in some chapter books, she is anxious for the ending to find out what happens". "Bill has always had an interest in books but now he is more confident when choosing a book. HE CAN DO IT! even if it looks hard". There is evidence that reading is now more a part of the participants' daily lives. As one mother commented, "More willing to go to her bedroom and read a book out loud; takes books to read when we are driving distances to ringette games, etc." There is even the suggestion that the activity of pleasure reading is making inroads on the amount of television time the children used to log! One mother wrote, "We look after a neighbour child in the morning. They used to watch cartoons before school. Now they often read books from our ever-expanding home library".

In the second part of item 10, parents were asked for their "Comments regarding effect on child in general. That is, do you observe any changes in confidence level or self-concept?" Many parents' comments again dealt with confidence shown in reading ability, although this item was actually probing for evidence of changes in the child's confidence level in more general terms. Some of the comments were: "A lot more confident when trying to figure words out"; "Has shown a big improvement in self-confidence. He will tackle any word now and is so impressed when he is close or right"; "Jeff used to look at the number of words per page and dismiss a book on the principle it had too many words -- NOT NOW". Several parents' comments did refer to the child's confidence in a more general sense. For example: "Became very proud of himself"; "Seems more confident about his school work" and this comment by the mother of a grade 2 boy: "Terry is more willing to try new things, while before he tended to avoid unknown things. There is still room for improvement, but there is definitely a change in attitude".

11) To what extent did your child enjoy receiving the incentives provided by the program?

According to their parents, most of the children were pleased to receive the incentives, with 15 (47%) enjoying them "very much" and 13 (or 41%) enjoying them "to some extent". Only 3 students (9%) were "not really interested" in them and one mom was not sure.

The responses to the question, "Did he/she enjoy one of the incentives more than any of the others?" were almost evenly divided with 17 parents saying "yes" and 15 choosing "no". When specifying the favourite incentive, the "Dandy Bucks" (as the book gift certificates are called) were the runaway choice with 11 students favouring these over the other incentives. When asked for comments about the provision and choice of incentives, the reaction was mostly positive. There were comments like: "A good idea"; "Looking forward to going shopping for a book"; "Good reinforcement yet still pertaining to reading". One mother wrote: "Excellent ideas. He felt he earned them by working hard and really treasured them". On the other side of the question, one parent thought they were "not necessary"; another said the program would have worked well with or without them; and while some children liked the bookmarks, one parent commented, "Too many bookmarks!"

Under section IV, "General Assessment of Project", questions 12-18 were posed.

12) How easy/difficult was it for you to keep using the Paired Reading system throughout the two months of the study?

Nine parents (28%) stated that it was "not difficult to keep it up"; 19 (59%) said it was "somewhat difficult to keep it up" (2 of these added it was only toward the end this happened); and 2 families (6%) found it "very difficult to keep it up", with one stating that "as interest waned, resistance grew". Two parents did not respond to this item.

13) To what extent did you adhere to the Paired Reading method as it was explained and demonstrated to you?

Ten parents (31%) said they felt they "practised the Paired Reading method at all times"; 15 (47%) replied that they "practised the Paired Reading method most of the time"; 6 parents (19%) said they "practised a combination of the Paired Reading method and other techniques which I learned work with my child"; and one respondent did not answer the question.

14) What were some of the factors which made it difficult to fulfil the requirements asked of a Paired Reading family? (Circle the letter(s) of all that apply.)

The factor most often cited as making it difficult to keep up the home reading was, not surprisingly, "not enough time in the family's daily schedule". This response was given by 18 parents or 56% of those returning questionnaires. The next greatest interference was caused by the "child too tired from other activities/other homework". This fatigue factor was mentioned by 12 parents or 38%. Causing a problem to the parents of students who had very limited reading skills was "difficulty locating appropriate books for child", cited by 7 parents or 22% of the group. The two remaining choices "child not interested in reading" and "child did not like the Paired Reading method" were marked by 5 parents (16%) and 2 parents (6%) respectively. On this section 3 parents (about 10%) circled no interfering factors, stating "we had no difficulty" and "we had no problem incorporating the program into our daily schedule".

Comments following this item highlighted the difficulties from the perspective of the individual families, e.g. "With both parents working shift work, sometimes difficult to get the required amount of reading time in"; "Other homework was added near the end -- this put pressure on him". In one case the success of the program turned out to be, ironically, the reason the child did not wish to use it near the end. As his mother put it, "Improved ability was a major disincentive!".

15) What was the worst or most difficult part of the program as far as you and your child were concerned?

To this open-ended question, many parents' replies continued along the theme of "too much to do -- too little time". Other problems cited had to do with the method itself; at the end of the program particularly, many children no longer wanted their parents to read along with them. A couple of parents said they would get the signal "on the very next word", after helping with a troublesome word or phrase. A few said the early days of the program, when the child was still learning the system, were the most difficult.

In one family the interruptions of a little sister were a problem. One enthusiast of paired reading, when asked what the worst part of the program was, replied simply, "It ended".

16) What was the best part of the program as far as you and your child were concerned?

The response to this question, although all different, expressed some common themes, a fact which allows them to be grouped into a number of categories:

Six parents (about 18%) focused on the idea of the books that were shared as being the most important part of the program. "We enjoyed the stories together", and, "Being together and discovering the world of books" are two comments typical of this category.

For two parents (6%) the double benefit of improvement in both reading skills and self-confidence was the best part. As the mother of a grade 2 boy (who gained 9 months in reading comprehension during the project) wrote: "The best part was the steady improvement in reading ability and confidence in reading out loud that occurred over the two months".

Three parents (almost 10%) referred only to the improvement in self-confidence as the best part. Another grade 2's mother wrote: "Seeing the improvement in self-confidence. Once we had the signals down to a science the program ran so smoothly. No one got upset. A positive experience for both".

One parent did not respond to this item and another thought the program would be more suitable for kindergarten or grade 1 students.

One parent only mentioned that the greatest benefit of the program was the reading improvement she had seen in her daughter. Assuming that the majority of the parents were attracted to the program as a possible means of helping their child improve in reading, this particular figure is interestingly low.

The majority of the respondents, 18 or 56%, thought that the best part of the program had to do with the time they spent, on a one-on-one basis, with their child. This valued private time and the closeness it engendered were mentioned in different ways over and over again. "(the best part was) spending time with my child. I learned that I need to find time to spend with my child reading"; "... having time together on a one-to-one basis -- the rest of the family recognized this time as ours. She is the youngest in our family so sometimes it is hard to have time with just her"; "We always read books, but by reading so intensely together, it became a very special time of the day. We felt very close"; and finally from the dad who had undertaken to be the reading partner for his grade 3 daughter, "Laura and I became closer. The program gave us a focus through which father/daughter relationships were enhanced".

17) Would you recommend the Paired Reading Method to a friend who wanted to help his/her child with reading?

The parents answered with a resounding "yes" -- 29 or almost 91%. Three parents (10%) chose "maybe" and none answered "no".

The parents were invited to sign their questionnaire "only if you wish". Of the 32 questionnaires returned, 27 or 84% were signed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Problems in Research Design

Before beginning a discussion of the conclusions and recommendations arising from the results, it would be appropriate to include some comments regarding the short-comings or drawbacks of the research itself.

Here are three flaws in the research design which might impact on the results:

1. As previously mentioned, the students in the grade 2 control group were all members of the same class. Likewise the students of the grade 3 control group were all members of one class. This composition was in contrast to that of the home intervention or experimental groups in which the students were drawn from 9 and 11 different classes respectively. In a true experimental model, the students in the control groups would also have been drawn from a number of classes -- ideally the same ones which contained the paired reading students. Ideally, the two groups, experimental and control, would have been matched in number and pre-test reading scores. As it was, the grade 2 control group had lower pre-test averages than the experimental group, and the grade 3 level, the opposite was true. However, the design used was the best that could be managed given that the project was carried out entirely by one, part-time researcher. Or as Tizard, et al. put it: "The research design was a compromise between the strict requirements of an experiment and judgements about real world feasibility". (p. 12)

2. It should be remembered that the regular classroom teachers recommended many children for the program. Over 100 names were submitted to the researcher. The 45 families who agreed to try the program were seen to be, by their actions, the most willing and motivated in terms of helping their children. One study questioned whether it is not this parental characteristic, rather than the actual home reading, which accounts for the students' progress. As stated in Tizard, et al. (1982), "Parents who listened to their children read were a self-selected group, and possibly the improvement was mainly due to the interest which they took in their children's schooling, of which help at home was only one powerful indicator, rather than to the help itself" (p. 1). These authors therefore went on to design a study in which all students in a number of classes were included in a home reading scheme.

3. The assessment tool used in the project, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, was chosen because of its wide use and acceptance, its Canadian norms, the fact that it has both A and B forms, and because it can be administered in a group setting. Despite these advantages, the construction of its first section, entitled "vocabulary", makes it questionable for use as a word recognition measure. (Each item consists of a picture plus four words. The child marks the word which names what the picture portrays.) Although this exercise includes a word recognition component, as the name of the section implies, there is an element of vocabulary knowledge involved. An additional assessment tool, such as the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT), in which the subject reads aloud from a graded word list, might have yielded more useful data here, especially for use in comparison with the British researchers' "progress in reading accuracy" results. The choice of the Gates-MacGinitie was a compromise dictated by the necessity of group testing.

B. Conclusions

How successful was the Portage Paired Reading Project? One way of measuring its success is to look back to the questions posed in the Statement of Purpose to see if and how satisfactorily they were answered.

1) Would the paired reading groups make gains in reading age (or age equivalent) on the standardized reading measure that would be greater than normal improvement? (That is to say, more than exactly proportionate to the passage of time?)

   In 5 cases out of 6, (2 grades x 3 test scores each) the paired reading groups made gains greater than those proportionate to the passage of time. The exception was at the grade 3 level in the vocabulary section where the gain was less than the amount of time elapsed. (One month's gain was made in two months.)

2) Would these gains be greater than those made by the control or comparison groups? If so, to what degree?

   At 5 of the 6 points of comparison, the paired reading groups made gains greater than those of the control groups.

   Again the exception was the vocabulary score for the grade 3's, where both groups, experimental and control, gained 1 month only. See Table 1 for the chart of all the figures.

3) Would these gains be as great as those claimed by the British researchers?

   In our experiment the paired readers did not make gains of 3 times normal progress in reading accuracy (2½ times the normal gain for the grade 2's was the highest) and did not make gains of 5 times normal progress in comprehension. (Remember, 5 times normal progress would mean an average gain of 10 months in a 2 month period.) The greatest gain in comprehension was made by the paired reading grade 3's, who improved by an average of 5 months -- or 2½ times the normal rate of growth.

   It should be noted, however, that although the Portage averages were not as high as those cited by the British researchers, there were individual students who made dramatic improvements. Among the grade 2 paired readers was one girl with starting points of 2.6 and 2.3 for vocabulary and comprehension respectively who scored at 3.3 and 3.9 on the reassessment for a growth of 7 months and 16 months on the two test sections. Another student, a grade 3 boy, had beginning scores of 2.3 and 2.6; his re-test scores were 2.8 and 4.7!

4)(a) Would the parents and children find the method easy to learn and practise and would they find the system motivating enough to sustain their interest for two months?

Referring back to the questionnaires, we recall that a total of 87% of the parents responding found the method either "very easy" or "easy" to learn. Also 68% said that it was either "very easy" or "easy" to teach their children.

The program completion rate of almost 89% suggests that the parents did find the system motivating enough to sustain their interest and that of their children. Also parents offered comments in the questionnaires which suggested that they preferred the paired reading system to other methods of helping their child. One mother wrote, "It's a lot better and more productive than just letting them read word-by-word -- very slow and both parent and child get uninterested and bored very quickly". Other parents commented positively on the structure of the method, as here: "Positive approach -- you simply read along without comment. It kept me from voicing opinions". Another mother zeroed in on one of the features which makes paired reading effective when she wrote: "Improved reading ability improves the child's self-confidence, but the fact that in this program the child is in control of the situation is, to me, equally important in their development".

4)(b) Would there prove to be some children for whom the method would be unsuitable on the basis of particular learning style or temperament?

We cannot forget about the one youngster who left the program very early and the other one who finished the program under duress. These cases should remind us that we cannot expect every student offered a given program, particularly one as prescriptive as paired reading , to be suited to it. In fact, Pumfrey wonders if, "... whether for some parent-child dyads the interactions could be aversive experiences leading to alienation from reading". (p. 93) The experiences of these two families underline the fact that, as Pumfrey goes on to state, "We need to be able to ensure that our general strategy is sensitive to individual needs and is not a rigid prescription". (p. 93)

5) What changes, if any, would the parents observe in the reading abilities of their son/daughter?

Parents observed many changes in reading abilities. The questionnaire results, especially item 9, document these observations.

6) What changes, if any, would the parents observe in their son's/daughter's attitudes toward reading?

Evidence of these changes is provided by the parent questionnaires. (Item 10)

7) Would the parents, based on their experiences in this program, be willing to recommend the method to friends or relatives who wished to help their child with reading?

Ninety-one per cent of the parents returning their questionnaires said they would recommend it. One parent said she planned to use it with her younger two children.

So, in terms of learning the answers to these questions, it appears that the Portage Paired Reading Project was very successful. In terms of the Paired Reading Technique, the degree of success with its use varied from partially helpful to extremely beneficial depending on the family which tried it.

To return to the proposal's title and the question which serves to unify the project, we ask again, "Can parents make a difference?" The answer is clearly "yes". Given what we already know about the importance of parents' involvement in their child's educational life, this may not, in itself, be unexpected. What may be a surprise to us are the ways in which parents made a difference. We must remember that when asked, "What was the best part of the program?" an overwhelming number of parents said it was the time they spent with their child while sharing their reading experiences. Given that paired reading was billed primarily as a reading improvement program and that the majority of the students' reading did improve, it is notable that the benefit treasured by most of the parents had nothing to do with increased reading skills and everything to do with building a better relationship via reading. This fact should suggest that the greatest benefits to accrue from pursuing paired reading with a child are those which cannot be measured by standardized tests.

C. Recommendations

One factor which has received little attention in this discussion is the role of the classroom teachers who were, of course, providing daily reading instruction programs to the students at the same time as the parents were reading with them at home. Although the progress of the paired reading students was compared with that of students who did not take part in the intervention, there is no clear-cut evidence that it was the paired reading practice which was responsible for the differences in reading attainment. As one mother, sceptical of the technique, wrote on her questionnaire: "Any improvement could just as easily be a result of regular class instruction, as of paired reading".

Certainly more and better designed studies are required if we are to appreciate the value of this particular strategy. A study using a true experimental design and better composed control groups would yield results which are not confounded by teacher effect. Nevertheless, the enthusiasm generated by parents and children, in combination with the empirical results obtained, seem to make a strong case for paired reading. As Johnston wrote, "Although the Hawthorne effect can be very powerful in any research, it would seem that paired reading may have a special place in the beginning reading stage". (p. 356)

Writing in *The Manitoba Teacher*, editor Miep van Raalte notes, "A teacher's dedication alone cannot create a truly literate society. Others must do their share". Certainly parents must share in the responsibility of helping their children become literate. Teaching parents to use the paired reading technique with their child seems a good starting point for primary teachers. In the words of one parent, "This program is so simple to learn and use, that it would be helpful to make it known to all teachers and parents of primary aged children".

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1-2-1 TUTORING
AN IMPACT STUDY

Donald E. Cordell

Education has been under increasing pressure to make explicit its goals and to be accountable for student growth toward these goals. Nowhere is concern greater than in the area of literacy. Even with the vast body of research on this subject the difficulties some students encounter are painfully evident to all and resistant to the most sophisticated program interventions.

Intuitively the sensitive, well informed educator has sometimes found the key to helping these few struggling students put the pieces of the literacy puzzle together. The secret in some cases appears to be in the special relationship that supports the students in their individual journey into literacy. This research investigated a tutoring program which is already gaining national attention as a successful remedial secondary school program. The investigation focuses on the evaluation of the program as it was modified and piloted with high risk clients at the grade three/four level in a single family of schools consisting of five elementary schools and one secondary school.

PURPOSE

This study represents an effort to measure and evaluate the impact of a Secondary-Elementary Cooperative tutoring program aimed at improving the literacy level of grade 3 and 4 students who were identified as at risk.

Who

The participants were:

1. Highly trained, experienced senior students (N=16) from a large secondary school who had proved themselves to be successful tutors with grade 9 and 10 students.

2. Elementary students from five feeder elementary schools (N=32). These students were selected based on their potential to gain from the project and their low level of reading achievement.

3. Staff

In-school Elementary Resource Teachers (N=5)
Elementary Classroom Teachers (N=13)
Superintendent (N=1)
Elementary Principals (N=5)
Secondary Principal (N=1)
Secondary Teacher (N=1)
Parents (N=51)

When

The project ran in the second semester of the 1989-90 school year with preliminary planning being completed in December of 1989. The final meeting of the staff and tutors took place in June 1990 with final data collection and analysis completed in August 1990.

Training Tutors

The secondary students were trained by a very innovative teacher using a comprehensive program he has developed for use in the secondary schools (Jones, 1989). Students who had been successful using the tutoring skill with grade nine students were selected to participate in the elementary project by Mr. Jones.

These students were receiving a guidance credit for their participation. Some additional training was required during the first part of the semester before these senior tutors were ready to be matched with the elementary students. Specific strategies for beginning readers were introduced into the program for purposes of this project.

During this time the secondary students met with the elementary teachers, in-school resource teachers and elementary principals. These meetings were organized by the superintendent and secondary school principal. The purpose of the meetings was largely to build communication channels and identify any areas of concern. The teacher in charge of the secondary tutors outlined the kinds of reading strategies his students would be using and asked for input from the teachers. All sites were visited by the tutors and expectations and accommodations were finalized. Most agreed that these would have to be flexible and responsive.

The Program

The program ran in the elementary schools from February 19/90 until June 8/90 for four days a week. Average contact time per day was 30 minutes between tutor and student. Activities varied from very direct reading instruction and writing activities to playing computer games, soccer and talking about stories and experiences to build rapport. Tutors met once per week as a group to share ideas, concerns and insights. The researcher was also present at some of these meetings to collect qualitative data, provide additional teaching strategies and assist with problem solving.

Data Collection

Tutors were required to keep a daily record of their interactions as an important contribution to the research process. The contributions of these students after an average of 60 school visits with 32 elementary students resulted in approximately 2000 pages of qualitative data. Added to this were taped interviews and classroom sessions where tutors shared their insights with the researcher. This information was read, coded and sorted for themes and emergent insights.

Three standardized instruments were administered as pre- and post-program measures.

1. Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (1987)
   S.E.I. -- self report
2. Behavioural Academic Self-Esteem (1982)
   B.A.S.E. -- teacher rating scale
3. Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test Form C and D

A parent rating scale was also provided to assess the perception of parents.

Principals, in-school resource teachers, tutors, the superintendent and the tutor supervisor reconvened for a final meeting June 11, 1990 to discuss the results of the program. This information, along with the results of the summary of data analysis, will be presented at the conclusion of this report.

Rationale for the Selection of Instruments

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (1987)

The S.E.I. has been shown to have a correlation coefficient of .33 (p.01) with the S.R.A. Achievement series (Simon and Simon, 1975). Schnee (1978) used a factor analytic study with 800 elementary students and reported a significant relationship between reading comprehension and word meaning measures with the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory.

The instrument required very little valuable school time for students to complete and could be administered by the in-school resource teacher. The results could be hand scored by the researcher in a reasonable amount of time. A study by Kokines (1974, 1978) included over 7,600 students of approximately the same age as this sample. Coopersmith (1987) reports that the study "confirmed the construct validity of the subscales".

The S.E.I. provides measures of:

(a) Social Self
(b) Home - Parents
(c) School - Academic
(d) Lie Scale (Indicating openness).

The four subscales represented areas where the tutor program had potential for impact based on pre-study interviews with experienced tutors.

The Behavioural Academic Self-Esteem (B.A.S.E.) (1982)

Coopersmith and Ragnar (1982) recommend the use of this instrument for assessing how programs affect student motivation, evaluating factors that affect academic self-esteem and for identifying students' levels of academic self-esteem. Since the teachers were not being provided with release time to participate in the study the ease of completing the 16 item form was a very important consideration. Although there are several available observer rating scales, none provided a more appropriate format. The factors are defined by Coopersmith and Ragnar (1982) as:

> *Student Initiative Factor* measures how often students participate in classroom activities.
>
> *Social Attention Factor* measures the extent to which the student fits into the classroom environment
>
> *Success Failure Factor* measures how successfully students cope with failure, criticism, correction, admonition, etc.
>
> *Social Attraction Factor* measures how compatible youngsters are with their peers and the child's self descriptions
>
> *Self Confidence Factor* measures a youngster's level of verbal expression about school accomplishments including expectations of future performance.

The authors of the B.A.S.E. recommended the use of the B.A.S.E. in conjunction with the S.E.I. for the most thorough way of combining the methods of self report and observation. In addition these two measures share a single theoretical framework.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Self-Esteem Inventory

Table 1 reports the pre- and post-project results on the self-esteem inventory. As may be noted, overall growth in self-esteem, as measured by the S.E.I., was 12.9. The analysis of the students' perception of themselves was the most encouraging aspect of the study. Growth was observed in all areas measured.

	Percentage Increase
(a) General Self Subscale Score	7%
(b) Social Self-Peers Subscale Score	7%
(c) Home-Parents Subscale Score	6%
(d) School-Academic Subscale Score	13%

These findings would tend to support the validity of the measure. It could reasonably be expected that the program would have the greatest impact on School-Academic Measures and the least effect on items related to the Home-Parent subscale. It would appear that the instrument was sensitive and differentiated the growth in these areas.

The S.E.I. also includes a "lie scale" which provides an index of the child's defensiveness. It was found that 19 of the 31 students decreased on this measure, 6 increased and 6 remained constant. These data would indicate that 19 students felt more comfortable and forthright in their self-appraisal.

The validity of these measures is also supported by the journal reports and interview data. The qualitative data not only supported the general direction of growth but indicated that the boys exhibited more enthusiasm for the program, although there were exceptions.

It is important to note that Rubin, Dorle and Sandbridge (1976) found that the School-Academic subscale of the S.E.I. was the factor most strongly related to school success. The growth in this factor certainly is encouraging.

Table 1. Self-Esteem Inventory (Self Report) Results by Sex and School

School	Males			Females			Total			
	Total	N	Mean	Total	N	Mean	Total	N	Mean	
I	350	7	50.0	140	2	70	490	7	70.0	Pre
	512	7	73.1	124	2	62	636	7	70.6	Post
II	214	3	71.3	176	3	58.6	390	6	65.0	Pre
	224	3	74.6	199	3	66.3	423	6	70.5	Post
III	174	3	58	142	2	71	316	5	63.2	Pre
	178	3	59.3	110	2	55*	288	5	57.6	Post
IV	124	2	64	178	3	59.3	302	5	60.4	Pre
	164	2	82	184	3	61.3	348	5	69.6	Post
V	118	2	59	218	5	43.6	336	6	56.0	Pre
	168	2	84	314	4	78.5	482	7	68.9	Post
Total	980	17	57.6	854	15	56.9	1834	32	57.3	Pre
	1246	17	73.3	931	14	66.5	2177	31	70.2	Post

* Note: The one negative growth pattern was skewed as the result of one girl's scores who had a family situation emerge in June which could easily explain her response. The other participant in this small group (N=2) had a more typical positive growth profile.

Behavioural Academic Self-Esteem (B.A.S.E.)

Table 2 reports results for the Behavioural Academic Self-Esteem scale. it is not surprising to find that the scores on this measure, for these students, were very low. Although the criterion for inclusion in the sample was simply students who would "benefit" from inclusion in the program, it appeared that schools selected students who had observable behaviours which would be indicators of low self-esteem. In only one case was a student evaluated in the "high" level of self-esteem in pre- or post-program measures (N=62), with most measures in the level of "low self-esteem".

Table 2. Pre- and Post-Test Group Analysis of Total Behavioural Academic Self-Esteem Scores by Sex and School

School	Males			Females			Totals			
	Total	N	Mean	Total	N	Mean	Total	N	Mean	
I	370	7	52.8	94	2	47	464	9	51.5	Pre
	380	7	54.4	89	2	44.5	469	9	52.1	Post
II	148	3	49.3	160	3	53.3	308	6	51.3	Pre
	146	3	48.6	93	2	46.5	239	5	47.8	Post
III	179	3	59.6	123	2	61.5	302	5	60.4	Pre
	175	3	58.3	110	2	55	285	5	57.0	Post
IV	95	3	31.5	86	3	28.6	181	6	30.1	Pre
	151	3	50.3	122	3	40.6	273	6	45.5	Post
V	111	2	55.5	265	5	53.0	376	7	53.7	Pre
	55	1	55.0	156	3	52.0	211	4	52.75	Post
Total	903	18	50.2	728	15	48.5	1631	33	49.42	Pre
	907	17	53.4	570	12	47.5	1477	29	50.93	Post

The authors of the scale suggest a sex difference exists, reporting a mean for males of 55.20 S.D.'s 10.69 and for females 57.65 S.D.'s 10.18. It was interesting to note that although the mean for a representative or normal population would appear to be higher for females than for males the opposite was true for this sample. It could be that observed academic behaviour for females may require more extreme manifestations to draw attention for special program support than for males. In all schools the female scores were lower than the male scores for the sample.

The pre-test and post-test measures were not significantly different with no significant correlation between measured reading improvement and B.A.S.E. scores.

It was predictable from what we know about behaviour that student observable academic classroom behaviour would be much more resistant to change than attitudes. The data would support this. The short period of time did not allow for the learning of new observable behaviour patterns which would reflect the changed attitudes reported in the S.E.I. and by the tutors, students and parents. This may be one explanation of the relative stability of B.A.S.E. scores.

The stability of behaviour is an important finding and premature rejection of the program can be avoided based on this insight.

Reading Results

The elementary students selected to work in this program were chosen based on wide ranging school established criteria. The one explicit criterion, common in all school selections, was a concern about the level of achievement in reading proficiency. Staff in many cases expressed concerns about their students' achievement in both writing and reading as the two are obviously related and taught simultaneously in elementary classroom programs.

The reading levels were evaluated using an instrument currently used by the system. This was largely to accommodate school needs. The writer is well aware of the limitations of this instrument. The pre- and post-program reading measures were taken using either the Gate-MacGinitie Level A, B, or C, Form 1-2 where appropriate. This was a very gross measure as it is designed as a group test to measure program effectiveness rather than an individual diagnostic test.

It was not surprising to find that some students were reading at a level below the lower limit of the available norms for the instruments. Since there appeared to be no significant correlation for measured growth in vocabulary and comprehension scores, composite scores were used as the representative measure for comparative purposes.

Of the three instruments used (B.A.S.E., S.E.I. and Gates), it was the reading measure that provided the greatest individual variance in pre- and post-test scores.

The authors of the test provide considerable support for the validity and reliability of the test which, along with ease of administration, made it ideal for the gross measure required. It was also noted that it was the program which was being evaluated and not individuals; therefore, it was an appropriate test for this purpose. Interpretation of individual scores has limited validity and reliability. As this was the only available objective measure of reading it does indicate that some students appeared to grow, in the areas measured by this test, at a much faster rate than others. The reader is cautioned that this type of individual analysis is not the stated purpose of this instrument.

From the qualitative information gained through staff interviews, parent responses and the journals of tutors it was clear that growth occurred in both reading and writing skills with all students. The individual reading test scores do not reflect this all inclusive picture. Scores ranged widely. In some individual cases questionable scores were explained by test administrators as artifacts of the testing conditions, student attitudes and time of year (i.e. June). It was also noted that this was not a representative sample of the "normal" population and the emotional contaminants of ending the significant supportive relationship with the tutor also could have influenced some participants.

Even with all of these rather negative factors operating it was important to note that all schools reported significant measurable gain in their mean reading scores for the sample group.

School I	4 months)	
School II	3 months)	
School III	8 months)	
School IV	3 months)	Mean of 4.2 months
School V	3 months)	

Given that the students involved were selected as the most critical reading problems and that 30% of the students were identified through I.P.R.C., it is encouraging to note that the overall average of 4.2 months would represent an increase in excess of what the "normal" child would be expected to gain over the same period.

CONCLUSIONS

The study was not designed to evaluate schools, teachers, or individual students. The purpose was to examine the impact of the 1-2-1 tutoring project at the elementary level.

When group means are used the quantitative findings are supported by the qualitative material in all areas.

However, when individual scores are examined there are some unanswered questions and inconsistencies. As this study did not set out to examine individuals, these questions will have to be answered in future work designed for this purpose. The data from the tables included in the body of this work indicates many possible areas of investigation and are included for that reason.

The program offered at each school was very different based on the tutor journal entries and teacher reports. It is interesting to note that even in a school where serious transportation problems limited the tutor contact and created many disappointments, the elementary students' self-esteem appeared to increase as did the reading scores. Through interviews with staff it became clear that because all staff were sensitive to the potential negative effect of the disappointments, the students were given extra staff support. As in all studies done outside of a controlled environment, it is usually questionable to determine a cause-effect link. However, it seems reasonable to make the following observations based on group results.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. All subscales, for the self reported attitudes of students, demonstrated a positive direction of growth in Academic Self-Esteem.

2. The greatest degree of growth was in the School-Academic subscale.

3. Parents reported eagerness about attending school increased and anxiety decreased.

4. Behavioural manifestations of growth were less evident and remained virtually stable as reported by classroom teachers on the B.A.S.E. scale. In contrast, teachers who were interviewed reported positive growth in the attitude of students toward academic activities.

5. Parents were very supportive of the program and reported many positive changes in their children which they attributed to the tutor program.

6. All elementary students interviewed following the program were enthusiastic about the tutor program and hoped it would continue. Many expressed a desire to have the same tutor and some suggested working in the summer.

7. Reading scores were increased by an average of 4.2 months over a period of approximately 3.5 months as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie reading tests.

8. All staff reported support for the continuation of the project provided that transportation and timetabling problems were solved.

9. Secondary tutors reported that they had learned patience and felt that they had made a worthwhile contribution.

10. Parents of elementary students reported that their children talked more about school and looked forward to working with their tutor.

11. The program allowed for the rapid development of positive supportive relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Board support the program as one successful method of intervention into the problems of literacy.

2. That the Board continue to monitor the success of the program.

3. That consideration of more intensive studies of individual students be considered to determine the important components in successful intervention. This would allow us to refine and specify the most effective use of time and provide screening and matching of tutors.

4. That all transportation be provided by the Board to eliminate the stress and negative impact of this component of the program.

5. That timetabling be adjusted or flexible enough to allow for secondary tutors to arrive at the elementary schools between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m.

6. That the very positive personal growth of tutors be examined as a separate study and the benefits to these students matched with stated secondary school program objectives.

7. That the program be expanded with caution, to ensure that the quality of training be maintained and that the resources are available to support the expansion.

8. That a study be made of the tutoring relationship to determine the cogent components relative to the development of literacy.

9. That the Ministry of Education initiate large scale studies of the program.

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THE USE OF THE READING STYLES INVENTORY IN INCREASING READING RATES AND COMPREHENSION OF MIDDLE LEVEL STUDENTS

Sheila Gabert

Literacy is a growing concern in society today. In fact, one-quarter of all Canadian adults are illiterate. Literacy is a problem for our younger generations as technology and the need for further education continue to increase in all job areas for the future.

Schools need to become more effective in preparing students to succeed as our society is moving from an industrial society into an information society. The jobs of the future will catch the adults who are illiterate and our "at-risk" students of today are the illiterate adults of tomorrow.

Many adult literacy programs have been started using various innovative ideas to teach adults to read, yet no "one best way" for teaching adults has been acknowledged. The same can be said about our schools; no "one best way" has been discovered for teaching our youth how to read.

This project will focus on improving the reading rates and comprehension abilities of middle year students in a grade seven English class. In particular, individual student learning styles will be noted and used as a means for improving instruction, thereby increasing individual student reading rates and comprehension.

Traditional ways of teaching are not always working and changes in education do not happen overnight. Now, more than ever, we need to identify each individual's learning style and use this information as a basis for providing the best possible instruction.

Each individual is unique and responds to learning situations differently. This probably explains why we have not found the "one best way" to teach adults or students how to read.

Teachers are becoming more aware of learning styles through professional literature, workshops and inservices but have not incorporated this awareness into their classrooms. Most teachers will resist the idea of teaching according to a child's learning style. They may feel it is too overwhelming to plan and instruct to meet the needs of each individual.

Instead, education supports the "average child concept". As educators we have supported this procedure, and even with our drop-out rates continue to pursue this course of action.

Our at-risk students and our present literacy rates are crying out for change, but in order for teachers, administrators, boards of education and parents to accept change, they must first experience success. With this in mind, the project will attempt to show that learning styles can make a difference in improving reading abilities.

REVIEW OF LEARNING STYLES LITERATURE

Research in the past decade has described learning styles in many different ways, but all theories acknowledge that everyone has a unique way of learning.

James Keefe (1979) defined learning styles as "characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment". In other words, learning styles are unique internal processes that guide how we take in information from our environment.

Rita Dunn (1987) interprets learning styles as defining five strands of work associated with learning styles. They are the environmental, emotional, sociological, physical and psychological strands. Dunn feels that all teachers can learn how to apply learning styles effectively in their classrooms. Dunn sums up her research with this thought: "Every single time we identify children's learning styles, and teach them to their style instead of against their style, we significantly increase achievement, and improve attitude".

As educators we need to look at our present teaching methods, which should differ from past teaching methods as we now educate more students from different social, cultural and intellectual backgrounds. It is no longer right, nor should it be, to teach to the "average" learner.

Bob Samples (1987) has observed education changing. He sees learning styles research as a reversal of traditional behaviorism that perpetuates mediocrity in our classrooms. Past research narrowly defined learning and schools adopted restrictive priorities. He feels this era is ending and celebrates the ultimate focus of learning styles: perceiving children as unique individuals.

Anthony Gregorc (1987) feels that teachers cling to the "average child concept" in its traditional procedures. He adopts the psychological strand when he defines learning styles as: "outer behaviours, characteristics and mannerisms, which tell the outer world about the psychological world within each of us". Gregorc feels that teachers must learn to honour their own individual learning styles. They must also attempt to facilitate the true ability of the learner. He feels to ignore this has serious implications. "To purposely cause mental distress by presenting materials in ways that they (learners) cannot truly fashion and handle, is indeed a moral issue".

As educators, the Dunns support one end of the continuum and advocate diagnostic inventories while Bernice McCarthy supports the opposite view of seeing inventories as unnecessary and that teachers should apply all modes in their teaching.

Pat Guild (1990) supports the middle route by suggesting that teachers look at learning styles conceptually. She encourages teachers to know at least two models of learning styles because focusing on one model may make an individual try to fit everyone into a category.

There is a danger in classifying or labelling students, therefore, it is important to research and apply a model that best fits the particular situation.

METHOD

Every program incorporating change needs a beginning point and one that will involve educators, leading to their acceptance of the program. One method that is user friendly and relatively inexpensive is Dr. Marie Carbo's Reading Styles Inventory.

This inventory was developed by Dr. Carbo as she completed her work on learning styles with Ken and Rita Dunn and the National Association of Secondary School Principals Learning Styles Project. The Reading Styles Inventory is an easy method for teachers to begin discovering individual learning styles in their students and it gives great insight into how a teacher may prepare instruction for reading. The information given is simple enough for students and parents to understand and use for reinforcement at home.

The Reading Styles Inventory not only provides the teacher with an individualized learning style profile for each student but also prints suggested groupings dependent on the style of instruction employed by the teacher.

Following is a breakdown of what the Reading Styles Inventory can show an individual.

ELEMENTS OF READING STYLE IDENTIFIED BY THE READING STYLE INVENTORY

1.	**ENVIRONMENTAL STIMULI**	Does the student read best:
	SOUND	with music, with talking, or in silence?
	LIGHT	in bright or dim light?
	TEMPERATURE	in a warm or cool temperature?
	DESIGN	in a formal design (hard chair at a desk) or an informal design (soft chair, rug, floor)?
2.	**EMOTIONAL STIMULI**	When reading, is the student:
	MOTIVATION	self motivated, not self-motivated, motivated by peers, motivated by adults?
		Does the student:
	PERSISTENCE	complete reading tasks?
	RESPONSIBILITY	do the work agreed upon or assigned?
	STRUCTURE	prefer little or much direction, many or few choices of reading materials, require time limits?
3.	**SOCIOLOGICAL STIMULI**	Does the student read best with:
	PEERS	five or six students?
	SELF	alone?
	PAIR	one other student?
	TEAM	three students?
	ADULT	a teacher, parent, administrator, etc.?
	VARIED	combination of students and adults?

4.	**PHYSICAL STIMULI**	Does the student read best:
	PERCEPTUAL	when taught through his/her visual modality, auditory modality, tactual modality, kinaesthetic modality, and/or with a multisensory approach?
	INTAKE	when permitted to eat and drink while learning?
	TIME	in the early morning, late morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, evening?
	MOBILITY	when permitted to move while learning?
5.	**PSYCHOLOGICAL STIMULI**	Does the student:
	GLOBAL/ANALYTIC	learn best holistically (globally) and/or logically, step-by-step (analytically)?
	HEMISPHERIC PREFERENCE	demonstrate left and/or right-hemispheric preference?
	IMPULSIVE/ REFLECTIVE	demonstrate impulsive and/or reflective thinking?

The reading Styles Inventory also recommends instructional strategies, reading materials, and reading methods for the teacher's consideration. The inventory shows the individual child's learning styles and incorporates students into common groups. With this sensitization to the student's profile, the teacher, student and parent can work together to improve reading abilities.

STUDENT PROFILE

This project will focus on one class of eighteen grade seven English students. The class consists of nine males and nine females who range in age from 11-13 years. Two students are of Native ancestry, one student is a foster child and several students are part of a Special Education pull-out program.

RESEARCH DESIGN: TEACHER AWARENESS

Evidence points to the need for learning styles in education as we need to develop young adults with higher literacy abilities. The use of learning styles involves the students in a variety of teaching processes which encourage students to read and experience success. One group of students who will benefit the most are our at-risk students. They usually lack "skills", not "smarts", and the learning styles approach develops skill processes which will help the student learn to read and comprehend at a higher level.

We know as educators that it is our responsibility to teach each individual, yet it is difficult to tap into some students. Our at-risk students are not motivated, yet we know as educators that motivated students will remain motivated no matter what their styles are. We also know from experience that a student, once hooked, is easy to teach. So as educators, we need to incorporate different learning styles into our lessons to motivate the at-risk student into learning at various times. It is our job to take discouraged students and encourage them.

If we teach to students' style strengths they feel validated, and that is what our at-risk students need. The use of learning styles will develop their self-confidence and self-esteem by making them feel worthy, further encouraging them to learn.

Researchers suggest the use of learning styles in order to reach all students and, in particular, the at-risk students.

Nancy Reckinger (1979) states that 62% of our students do not function well in traditional schools because they do not have traditional learning styles and personalities. She states that 70-80% of youths in juvenile detention facilities are auditory learners and that 38% of these students learn best through activity. In spite of this, we still do not provide education for students who learn best in nontraditional ways.

Rita Dunn's (1990) position is that students are not failing because of the curriculum. She feels students can learn almost any subject matter when they are taught with methods and approaches responsive to their learning strengths; those same students fail when they are taught in an instructional style dissonant with their strengths.

Lana Orsak (1990) makes a valid point about education in an article regarding a presentation she attended given by Ken and Rita Dunn. One of the presenters stated that if Rip Van Winkle came back today, the one thing he would recognize as being unchanged would be a high school classroom.

With our changing technology and advancements, why has our educational system remained the same?

With that thought in mind and my belief that I could make a difference, I prepared myself for a professional change. I felt the learning styles model could make a difference in education. It is a model for selecting strategies; the elements of lesson design describe how teachers work with their students to move them from thinking dependence to thinking independence, one of the goals of making our youths and adults of tomorrow more literate.

Research has shown the negative effects of school failure on a student's self-esteem and how it continues into their adult lives. In order to help turn this around, educators must believe they can make a difference and in light of this the use of Dr. Marie Carbo's Reading Style Inventory can be a starting point for the revolution against illiteracy.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Learning Styles Project started in August, 1989, with one grade seven English class. The students were introduced to learning styles in the first week of school through the use of a simple inventory that explained whether the students were visual, auditory, tactile or kinaesthetic learners. This was followed by a unit on Study Skills and how they could apply their learning styles to increase success at studying and in school work.

Rita Dunn (1990) says after being shown how to do homework using their style strengths, students demonstrated increases in academic achievement, improved attitudes towards school and increased school retention.

In November, the students were given Dr. Marie Carbo's Reading Styles Inventory and the results were communicated to the students as a class. The theory of learning styles was explained again and examples were given as to how learning styles could be applied in the classroom. The students were given the responsibility in choosing their preferred environmental, emotional, sociological, physical and psychological needs.

Once a firm base in the understanding of learning styles was established with the students, the literature program was introduced. The literature program was developed following Dunn's Contract Activity Packages as the program enabled the teacher to include all style strengths.

It is important to create a desire to read and in order to increase literacy the students need to be immersed in a wide range of literature. At the same time choices in reading material need to be provided which can also reduce stress in reading. Activities were created on skills identified as critical to increasing reading achievement and meeting the individual's style needs.

All students receive a contract for each reading unit and select an activity in each category that best meets their needs. Listed below is an idea of the structure behind a Contract Activity Package.

Area I. Vocabulary

This area assists students in developing a strong base for their individual vocabulary growth.

Sample Activities:

Use the list of words provided and select one of the following:

1. Make a crossword puzzle using listed vocabulary words
2. Find five words that are new to you and find the dictionary definition
3. Write a story using the vocabulary words
4. Illustrate the words.

Area II. Preparation for Reading

Good readers have a definite process that they follow when reading. In order to assist all students in developing good reading habits, such as developing a mind set, a few thoughts or questions are listed for the students to reflect upon prior to reading the selection.

Area III. Reading

Students have the option of reading alone, in pairs, in groups of their choice and/or listening to an audiotape of the story.

Area IV. Comprehension Activities

The students choose from several activities that show the level of the student's understanding of the story read and also fits various learning styles.

Sample Activities:

1. Answer the question following the story
2. Create a game board using the theme of the story as a basis
3. Videotape an interview of a character from the story
4. Create a movie poster for the story
5. Write an article for a magazine based on the main character's greatest accomplishments
6. Compare this story to another.

Area V. Conference

The students establish a time to discuss each story read with the teacher. This ensures the teacher that each student understands the story and provides the teacher with the time to assist students in their comprehension of the stories. This has proven to be a very effective way of understanding each student's abilities.

Area VI. Enrichment

As students advance through the contracts at their pace, enrichment projects have been developed for the faster working students. In order to provide all students with critical thinking skills enrichment projects have been included in various portions of each contract so that all students may participate in enrichment activities at various times.

Area VII. Evaluation

Evaluation takes place at the various areas and changes in format. Evaluations may be individual, group evaluation, or even peer evaluation. It is important to demonstrate high expectations for students' achievements so that each individual's strengths will increase throughout the year.

The new definition of literacy states that "in order to participate fully in today's society it is necessary not only to have basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, but also to be able to use those skills to carry out more demanding intellectual tasks. Those whose literacy skills have reached a higher level of development are able, for example, to interpret as well as read prose of the type found in newspaper articles magazines and books, to identify and use information contained in documents such as forms, tables, charts and indexes, and to apply numerical operations to information contained in printed material such as a menu, chequebook or advertisement".

Geraldine Gilliss (1990) stated, "A problem of literacy is really a problem of not being able to think, to solve problems with several steps".

The use of learning styles in the development of literature programs allows teachers to use their professional knowledge and classroom insights to suggest or explore ways of helping students attain higher levels of literacy.

The contracts allow for the development of critical thinking skills, problem solving skills and most importantly, the development of many learning processes they may use in the future.

PARENT AWARENESS

In order to keep parents informed and involved with the Learning Styles Project, the Home and School Association provided the opportunity for a presentation of Learning Styles in November, 1989.

Parent teacher interviews were used to show parents the results of the Reading Styles Inventory and, at this time, ways to assist their children were presented to back up the earlier presentation.

An article regarding Learning Styles was submitted to the April school newsletter for all parents to review.

In October of 1990, another Home and School evening provided parents with further insight into learning styles and their child. The focus was on how the parents could help their child succeed in school.

Parent teacher interviews again provided a time to show parents results of the new Reading Styles Inventory on their child along with the Myers Briggs Type Indicator that each student had completed. These were given to the parents so that they could see how their children perceived themselves. Parents have been receptive to Learning Styles as the jargon has been kept to a minimum and they can see how it applies to their child. Some parents have admitted to having a better understanding of their children through this program.

DATA COLLECTION AND EVALUATION OF THE LEARNING STYLES PROJECT

Data Collection on Teaching Methods

The following formative methods were used to obtain descriptive data:

Peer coaching
At task
Wide Lens
Video Recordings
Global Scan
Student Perception
SCATS (Survey of Classroom Activities by Teachers and Students)
Personal Journal.

These data were used by the teacher in conjunction with students and two peer coaches to assist in the development of the Learning Styles Project from September, 1989 to December, 1990.

The first month of school was used to establish classroom management and provide the teacher with the necessary time to meet the students.

One of my first concerns in moving into different teaching strategies was time-on-task. Would learning take place if I allowed the students controlled freedom in choosing how they preferred to learn?

Lecture style classes documented in my room by two peer coaches had shown high on-task behaviour, 90% or more.

As I moved into learning styles and students were allowed their controlled freedom, the time-on-task remained high, 94%.

As classroom procedures had been established by the teacher and students it was clear to myself and peer coaches that the use of different teaching methods does not affect time-on-task negatively.

Peer coaches proved to be extremely valuable for a planned professional change. Through their eyes I was able to see problems in a new light and learned that I was doing a great job. I was able to discuss problems and concerns with them. Through our discussions my peer coaches discovered the advantages of the learning styles model and I was able to reinforce my own knowledge.

The focus of the Learning Styles Project then changed to student to student interaction. Were the students accepting each other's differences? Were they sharing responsibilities and were they assisting each other in learning? The peer coaches noted that students were sharing ideas, reading and information. They noted that students respected each other's ideas and that students were not distracted by groups working together.

The peer coaches also noticed that through the use of contract activity packages, at-risk students were responding positively to school. They were not afraid to ask for assistance from their peers or teacher. They saw they could learn as they chose activities appropriate to their learning styles.

Native students responded extremely well to this approach as they tend to be non-verbal. The learning styles approach allows them to express their comprehension in a way that suits their style strength.

Peer coaching also showed how the learning styles model and contracts keep the students active. The "top" students work very well. The contracts allow them to work at their own rate, eliminating off-task behaviours. These students work well on their own, or in pairs when they feel it is convenient. They prefer to check with each other before asking the teacher for assistance.

The "middle" students need some teacher guidance in starting and will question various portions of the contracts. They are motivated with their work by observing the "top" students' progress and their own interests in keeping up.

The "lower" level students benefit the most from this program as the teacher can find a multitude of time in which to assist them. They tend to need assistance in organizing their work and time. Explanations are given regarding the contracts and they are shown how to break the contracts into smaller units. Supervised time is provided to complete assignments and the necessary encouragement is given to keep students interested in the task.

Another positive benefit of the program is that students become so involved in their work that class time is used very efficiently compared to former classes quitting early and waiting for the bell to ring.

PERSONAL DATA COLLECTION

Formative evaluation using videotapings, wide lens, and SCATS showed how the project developed a professional change from a strong command and task style teacher to a more rounded teaching style.

The use of SCATS has determined new goals for 1991 for the development of more peer partner style and independent learning styles work.

The personal journal shows the fears a teacher can experience when they are involved in change. I started out as very insecure, felt I was fumbling through some lessons as I wasn't sure how to introduce topics without lecturing. I felt I was very weak with transitions, directions, etc. all because I was not in control of the class. They were in control. It is a real risk for a teacher to move to the role of a facilitator, becoming more passive while the students become more active learners.

This is where peer coaches are the must useful. I learned to bounce ideas and problems off them and I soon discovered through their eyes that I was not fumbling but doing a great job! They were learning from me. It was my own insecurity in trying something new and then asking for assistance. Now, I discuss new ideas and possible problems with my peer coaches before teaching and see coaching as a great opportunity for personal growth.

The idea of changing from active to passive no longer bothers me. My role as a facilitator keeps me busy and I enjoy observing students learning. Through my change in teaching styles and with the assistance of my peer coaches and students I now see how the classroom has changed to a more positive and productive learning environment.

STUDENT DATA

The classroom climate surveys showed the majority of students found the class hard, interesting and fun. They especially enjoyed the group work or the option to work in pairs or groups but found it difficult to talk about any problems they were experiencing. This was discussed and presented as risk taking and the class developed some guidelines and options they could try in order to find solutions to problems.

The November 1990 surveys show how the students have matured as their statements note that the class is interesting, hard, fun and makes them think. They still find it difficult to admit they need help from the teacher but they still enjoy the opportunity to work with others. They now realize they have to plan their work, use outside information, recognize all people as equals, believe in their own opinions and improve the quality of their work in order to receive better marks.

We have grown through a common bond of finding "the best way" to teach the group. Our progress shows in the development of new units. Several possible ways of presenting a new topic are discussed and we decide as a group what is the best way. Needless to say, we have had several good discussions. The students enjoy taking an active role in the decision-making process and feel that they owe it to themselves to learn.

Our "Circle of Knowledge" groups have almost disappeared. This time was used to reteach units of study that students were having difficulty with. We have not had such a meeting since October, 1990. Clearly we are meeting the students' learning styles and as studies show, less reteaching is needed.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Canadian Tests of Basic Skills scores were compared from May, 1989, to May, 1990. The May 1989 scores show a range of grade equivalents from 6.2 - 9.3 with a mean of 7.5. The May 1990 scores show a range of 5.0 - 9.3 with a mean of 7.6.

The CTBS major purpose is to provide information which can be used for improving instruction. It is concerned only with basic skills and abilities and not intended to measure total achievement in any given subject or grade.

It is also known that middle years students show a decline in test scores but the reasons are not known why. We can only speculate that the move from elementary to middle level makes some type of impact on their learning. These students are also entering puberty and are going through many physical and emotional changes. Another possible reason for the decrease in grade levels is growing independence or, as in our case, the move from an elementary school into a middle/secondary school (grades 7-12), quite a large change. An increase of 1 month on the CTBS should then be considered a success for the project as the students did not decline in grade levels as expected.

The Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills was also used as an assessment instrument to determine reading levels. The total reading scores ranged from grade levels of 7.0 - 9.0 and had a mean of 8.3.

The Brigance test may also be used as an assessment instrument to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. It can identify basic skills that have or have not been mastered and provide data that will support other information needed for referral or diagnostic purposes. Comparing the means of the CTBS and the Brigance shows a difference of 7 months in reading abilities. This is not a significant difference and the results of the tests basically agree with one another on the students' reading levels.

A question to ask ourselves is how valid are the CTBS and Brigance test scores in measuring literacy rates. According to the new definition of literacy, as stated earlier in the paper, we need adults who can read, reason, apply critical thinking skills and determine a course of action. These tests are known for evaluating basic skills and therefore the results should be taken as such.

IMPACT

Learning Styles teaches students responsibility, respect for one another, social skills development through group work and the opportunity of learning many new processing skills.

As Carol Marshall (1990) states "teaching to style represents a philosophical change from tradition to a mutual embrace of accountability".

We need to teach students how they learn so they can teach themselves. The changes that the students have shown are the responsibility to learn, and to respect one another's learning styles. Social skills were developed through group work and the program developed critical thinking skills. All of these skills are necessary in order to survive in the future work force. The overall impact of the Learning Styles Project has been an increased interest in reading and an improvement in comprehension of reading materials.

Learning Styles empowers the students. Instruction is planned from the student up instead of from the teacher down. At-risk students develop learning strengths and discover that they are valuable members of a group. All students bring their unique talents together and cooperation develops collaboration, another skill of the future.

In the long run, all the students developed stronger self-esteem and self-concept, something the traditional classroom has failed to do.

As Janet Perrin (1990) says, gains in achievement are easy to calculate but gains in self esteem are immeasurable.

As teachers, working with the Learning Styles model makes us more tolerant of differences within students. We develop more ways to teach and in the long run do less reteaching. This was clearly evidenced in the classroom. The environment definitely changed from a passive, manageable room to a classroom that has developed healthy relationships, self-concepts, and most importantly, promotes active learning.

Further evidence to back up the use of Learning Styles follows with Harvey Silver (1990) stating that at-risk students learn best through direct actual experience, cooperation and collaboration, and high levels of interaction.

Bernice McCarthy (1990) believes by planning lessons with style in mind, teachers "give the majority of kids a better chance".

Peer coaching has helped tremendously in the development of the project. Moving from a skeptic to a firm believer I now see that I am not reteaching as many things, I have more strategies for dealing with problems, students are reading more and their comprehension is improving, I have few discipline problems and most importantly, I am enthusiastic and excited about investigating, planning, and trying to bring others on board in regard to learning styles.

Learning Styles does make a difference in education. Fellow teachers are now acknowledging hanging around outside the room and listening to the class. They are amazed to see the productivity of the class and are now admitting that they are seeing the benefits moving into their rooms. Students are beginning to ask teachers to change; that they prefer to learn in a certain way and can state reasons why they should be allowed to work the way they prefer.

Another teacher mentioned that in Career Education she had the students write autobiographies. They were to list their least favourite subject and their favourite subject. She was shocked to see English appear as one of the favourite subjects and never appear as one of the least favourite subjects.

Learning Styles has moved into further implementation within our school system as teachers are now asking questions regarding learning styles and are beginning to try various methods on their own or with their peer coaching groups.

CONCLUSION

The Learning Styles project will not end in December, 1990. In fact, it has grown in implementation. As of September, 1990, three more English classes were introduced to the Learning Styles model. The Learning Styles model enables teachers to acknowledge individuals and discover ways to help make every student's school career successful.

Descriptions of future business practices state that workers will need to learn large amounts of new materials in unfamiliar situations, to develop new skills as yet unidentified, and to attain more knowledge. Students who become familiar with Learning Styles will learn many processes that they may use in the future job force.

Marie Carbo (1990) feels the quickest path towards a literate society is to make learning to read what it should be: natural, easy, and enjoyable. If this happens, our students will choose to read and will likely become truly literate.

In today's world teachers need to become more eclectic in nature. Individualizing a child's learning will increase the desire and ability to learn. By using the Reading Styles Inventory as a base for developing programs, teachers may then determine which method will best suit the needs of their classes.

Also, by increasing their knowledge of all the methods they may use, teachers are better able to develop a program congruent with students' needs, thus making learning a more positive experience and undoubtedly leading to an increase and interest in reading.

Pat Guild (1990) states we're not going to find the one right way to design or restructure schools. We're not going to find the one right way to teach reading. If we believe in learning styles, we know that there are always going to be many right ways.

Learning Styles is more than another innovation. It is a model and a possible solution for teachers and students to use in building a more literate society.

REFERENCES

1. Blair, Dee, and Sherry Selph Judah. (1990) Need a strong foundation for an interdisciplinary program? Try 4Mat! Educational Leadership, vol. 48, No. 2, October.

   A high school in Indiana is preparing high school students for the work force by ensuring their courses offer practical applications of academic concepts to real-life situations.

   Using 4Mat, English classes can take the Scarlett Letter and apply it to today by debating abortion and single parenting. This school has found 4Mat an extremely useful model to follow when developing curriculums.

2. Boham, L. Adrianne. (1989) Using learning style information, too. Elisabeth Hayes, Effective Teaching: New Directions for Continuing Education. San Francisco, CA.: Jossey-Boss.

   Many learning style theorists state that people learn more and enjoy their classroom experiences more when they use their preferred learning styles. This article looks at identifying styles and matching teaching methods along with educating learners about their own styles.

   The author feels it is not necessary to match teachers to learning style as most students adapt a teaching method so it fits their preference. The author feels we all need to become more resourceful learners. (Use all styles.)

   Using matched learning styles does increase learning and gives more learner satisfaction. The author feels that what enhances learning is that teachers and learners give careful attention to the process and do not devote all their attention to the content to be learned.

3. Brandt, Ron. (1990) On learning styles: a conversation with Pat Guild. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

   Pat Guild approaches Learning Styles through an eclectic approach. She believes in selecting from the Learning Styles theories based on the situation.

   She states it is important to look at Learning Styles conceptually. We should keep in mind that people are different, learners respond differently to a variety of constructional methods and we need to respect and honour the individual differences.

Another point to note is that Guild feels the use of Learning Styles will not overwork or overload teachers. In fact, she feels it will make their job easier in the long run. She states that as students start to learn, teachers do less reteaching and teachers have more strategies for dealing with problems.

A very important point is that Pat Guild states we are not going to find the one right way to teach reading but if we believe in Learning Styles, we know that there are always going to be many right ways.

4. Brunner, Carolyn E, and Walter S. Majewski. (1990) Mildly handicapped students can succeed with learning styles. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

This article describes a school's efforts in applying Learning Styles and the success of the students as a result of the application of the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Theory. Work began in 1987 with the development of units of study.

Learning Styles staff development was started. In 1988 the students were assessed and teachers developed instruction according to the individual strengths. Classrooms were changed to meet environmental elements. By 88-89, 91% of the students successfully graduated, up from 25% in 1987.

The benefits of Learning Styles that they see are:

1) Students see they can succeed
2) Teachers see students' self-esteem improve
3) Fewer discipline problems
4) Mainstream students are showing comparable gains.

5. Caine, Renate Nummela, and Geoffrey Caine. (1990) Understanding a brain-based approach to learning and teaching. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

The Caines note that we are only just now beginning to discover the complexity and potential of the human brain. In order to give a theoretical foundation for brain-based learning they suggest the following:

1) Good teaching "orchestrates" all dimensions of processing
2) Teaching must incorporate stress management, nutrition, exercise, drug education and other facets of health into learning
3) Educators must provide an environment that provides stability and familiarity

4) For teaching to be relevant, a learner must be able to create meaningful and personally relevant patterns
5) Teachers must understand that a student's feelings and attitudes will be involved in learning
6) Good teaching builds understanding and skills over time
7) Teachers should organize materials that will be outside the focus of the learner's intention
8) Active processing should be allowed
9) Teachers should be multifaceted.

The Caines feel we need to move into meaningful learning and recognize brain education is an approach to ensure success.

6. Carbo, Marie. (1990) Igniting the literacy revolution through reading styles. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

Carbo's article states that we need to recognize that there is no one best way to teach reading. We need to build children's interest in reading as the future will demand us to continue learning new skills. She gives five recommendations to increase literacy.

1) Identify style
2) Match methods and materials to style strengths
3) Demonstrate high expectations for students' achievement and a high level of respect for their different styles of learning
4) Use reading materials that reflect the students' interests
5) Remove stress from learning how to read by:
    a) Teaching students about learning styles
    b) Choose reading materials carefully
    c) Taped stories increase reading rates.

7. Carbo, Marie, and Helene Hodges. (1988) Learning Styles Strategies Can Help Students at Risk; Teaching Exceptional Children.

Research indicates at-risk students have learning styles (1-12 odds) that are at odds with the styles required to succeed in traditional educational systems. Carbo and Hodges feel that if we accommodate the at-risk students' styles we will see increased academic achievement and fewer discipline problems. Their studies show that most at-risk students learn best in an informal, highly structured environment, which also provide soft lights, headsets, and music. More tactile/kinaesthetic, mobility and intake should also be provided.

8. Carbo, Marie. (1988) The evidence supporting reading styles: a response to Stahl. Phi Delta Kappan. December.

In this article, Carbo corrects Stahl's errors regarding the evidence for Reading Styles. The Reading Styles Inventory research shows dramatic changes in reading gains, contrary to Stahl's opinion. This research is on-going.

Carbo feels that matching instruction with students' reading styles has resulted in significantly higher achievement in reading fluency and comprehension across grade levels. She also feels that at-risk students have learned to read at rates two to five times greater than their former rates. Carbo attacks Stahl's claim that 70 years of research points to phonics instruction. She feels data were omitted and skewed. This opinion is supported by others.

9. Carbo, Marie. (1987) Matching reading styles: correcting ineffective instruction. Educational Leadership. October.

Reading Styles can help educators raise literacy levels by matching styles. Carbo suggests major changes to our teaching approach.

1) No single reading method is best
2) Lack of mastery of a decoding skill doesn't indicate a need for that skill
3) Most primary students are global/tactile/kinaesthetic learners who need to learn holistic methods
4) Pull-out programs may create poor readers.

Carbo feels we can increase reading rates through

1) Eliminating decoding from achievement tests
2) Deemphasizing decoding scores when determining student placement
3) Accommodating students' reading styles
4) Providing inservice
5) Evaluating basal readers and workbooks and omitting poorly written and boring stories
6) Reading to students
7) Creating reading environments
8) Using a variety of reading methods
9) Using various reading materials
10) Providing silent reading time.

10. Carbo, Marie. (1987) Reading styles research: what works isn't always phonics. Phi Delta Kappan.

This article states that public pressure is mounting due to increased literacy rates. The Education Department supports Phonics. Carbo states teaching of reading is not a contest between phonics and the whole word approach. She feels we each have a style that predisposes us to a reading style. Carbo states that there are three kinds of reading styles.

1) Phonics -- those who need phonics in order to read
2) Those who can learn phonics but don't need them
3) Those who are unable to master phonics.

Carbo again states that matching styles to learning increases reading ability.

11. Curry, Lynn. (1990) A critique of the research on learning styles. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

Curry attacks Learning Styles proponents by stating three problem areas:

1) Confusion in definition
2) Weakness in reliability and validity measurements
3) Identification of relevant characteristics in learners and instructional settings.

The majority of the article focuses on the relativity and validity measurements and the author shows how learning styles researchers have rushed articles into print.

Curry feels researchers need to break down learning styles and do more intensive research. She also states most research has been done by graduate students under faculty members with a vested interest. Curry states alternate explanations for any success documented under learning styles.

1) General intelligence
2) Adaptive Education -- "tailoring instruction for individual learners"
3) Instructional Alignment -- focus on the idea of the outcome.

Curry ends by saying that until the fundamental concepts of validity and reliability are established and each concept carefully investigated, researchers and users alike will continue to grope.

12. Dunn, Rita. (1990) Rita Dunn answers questions on learning styles. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

Rita Dunn acknowledges that the many different learning styles theories all honour the diversity among individuals and that most models urge teachers to adapt instruction to the ways individuals learn. As most models are new, research may vary. Dunn does not feel we are labelling students by identifying their "strength", as students show statistically higher achievement and attitude test scores when taught to their strengths.

Dunn backs this with many examples in the article. She then states that it is not impossible for teachers to respond to students' styles. If we read, research and apply, we will see students becoming more responsible and teaching will become more enjoyable.

13. Dunn, Rita, and others. (1989) Survey of research on learning styles. Educational Leadership. March.

Research indicates that less motivated high school students prefer working with distractors but are strongly peer motivated. They also require more tactile, kinaesthetic resources and mobility. The at-risk students also need to be taught alternately with both global and analytic lessons. If provided with this they will achieve statistically higher on test scores.

14. Dunn, Rita, and Shirley A. Griggs. (1988) Learning Styles: Quiet Revolution in American Secondary Schools. National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Virginia.

Planned change enhances the learning process. The stages of change are identified by a number of researchers. (Bentzen '74, Goodlad '84, Bok '86)

1) Awareness -- recognition that there is more than one effective system or approach
2) Knowledge -- acquiring content and understanding of the change or innovation
3) Personalization -- ownership of the program. People need time to change and reflect
4) Implementation -- experimenting in the class
5) Consequences -- how the program affects students, teachers and others
6) Collaboration -- critical for implementing change, need to meet to share, coordinate and cooperate
7) Refocusing -- new directions, benefits from the change

8) Evaluating -- evaluate the effectiveness of the change -- keep anecdotal notes on self and students.

It is important to note changes made in schools where leadership styles are idealistic, pragmatic and collaborative.

15. Fingarsen, Frank. (1988) The lesson: why do you force your ways? Education Manitoba.

Fingarson writes of a personal experience as a teacher.
He was teaching native students and called a parent in for an interview due to the lack of effort on the student's part. The parent shows the teacher how his son can learn. Just teach him what he needs for his culture. Fingarson sets out to show Matthew how to learn and use his mind by using the child's experiences to educate him.

16. Garcia, Ricardo L. (1988) The Need for Bilingual/Multicultural Indian Education. Teaching the Indian Child: A Bilingual/Multicultural Approach. Eastern Montana College.

The author states that teaching Indian children is no different from teaching other children. We need to understand and respect individualism of all children of cultural minorities. We need to explore the cultures and not compare them to ours or the majority culture. We need to take care not to teach to the majority lifestyle/learning but to the individual. If classroom experiences are compatible with the student's learning style, a student will learn. We should also take care to add multicultural instruction to our lessons so all may understand and accept differences in one another.

17. Garger, Stephen. (1990) Is there a link between learning styles and neurophysiology? Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

Granger states that traditional classrooms go against many students' Learning Styles and by doing this set the student up for failure. He states that the less severe cases of hyperactivity are students who need mobility, tactile simulations, intake, kinaesthetic learning and sound. These increase the level of the neural systems to make focusing on the task at hand easier. They act like a nonprescriptive amphetamine to increase the flow of electrical currents, arousing the student to focus on a task.

Garger realizes this can't be proven, but from an educators point of view has seen students respond positively.

18. Hand, Kathi, L. (1990) Style is a tool for students, too! Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

Kathi Hand, an 8th grade teacher, writes an article on how valuable it is to teach students Learning Styles. Her purpose is to help students become more aware of their own styles and to help them develop strategies for dealing with the diverse demands of school and life. Hand sees the benefits to the students as:

1) They gain confidence in their strengths and develop strategies for challenging situations
2) Learn more effectively and efficiently -- able to take more responsibility
3) Learn that there is no better way to learn -- just different.

19. Johnson, David W., and Roger T. Johnson. (1986) Mainstreaming and cooperative learning strategies. Exceptional Children, vol. 52, no. 6, p. 553-561.

Mainstreaming is based on the assumption that placing heterogeneous students in the same classroom will facilitate positive relationships and attitudes among the students. Cooperative learning places the students in small groups and they share goals. Research indicates that cooperative learning makes students learn more, like school better, like each other better and provides the students with more effective social skills.

20. Jaouen, Pat. (1990) Fostering students' awareness of learning styles. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

The staff of Mt. Everett Regional High in Sheffield, Mass. had taken Learning Styles courses and wanted to make the grade 7 and 8 students aware of "styles" also. The students took the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and then they moved through activity stations, geared to a type, and identified the particular style being used. Lessons were easier to design by mixing the styles types and students were analyzing lessons to determine what appeals to them. Students now come forward to discuss ways in which they can learn a particular lesson.

21. Kelly, Lynn S. (1990) Using 4Mat to improve staff development, curriculum assessment, and planning. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

A school started a major staff development program after several teachers attended a 4MAT Learning Styles Conference. The school now bases its curriculum development on Learning Styles as a way to meet students' needs. This school is looking beyond standardized achievement in a broad continuum. Teachers are expanding their repertoire of testing, evaluating and grading students to honour and challenge their individual style preferences.

22. Lemmon, Patricia. (1985) A school where learning styles make a difference. Learning Styles Network, Vol. 64, No. 4. March.

A principal writes about the implementation of learning styles in her school. Students were tested and made aware of preferred learning styles. A large number of students tested out tactile but the most significant difference showed in tests (Iowa Basic Skills). They were presented at the child's preferred learning time and significant gains were shown in reading and math. The median test score rose 1.6 years and the low scores were raised by more than 2 years.

22. Marshall, Carol. (1990) The power of the learning styles philosophy. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

A Special Education Consultant writes about the Texas school reforms of 1984. She saw how students who needed help were being pressured and were quitting in droves. The introduction of Learning Styles has changed everything for the school and students. The fact that Learning Styles recognizes the uniqueness of all brings about unqualified success stories. Learning Styles is a philosophical change -- we must teach the students how they learn so that they can teach themselves. Students learn they have the power to contribute to their own learning success. It is stated that teachers should plan instruction from the students up. By using Learning Styles we are looking at success, without it we will continue to fail.

23. McCarthy, Bernice. (1990) Using the 4Mat system to bring learning styles to schools. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

McCarthy developed the 4Mat system to help teachers organize their teaching based on the differences in the way people learn. McCarthy describes an overview of the system, the 4 major learning styles and then describes how we can use the 4Mat Cycle as a change system.

Quadrant 1: Attitude Shifts in Meaning
When teachers become aware of Learning Styles differences they address the issue of differences in learners through their own eyes. They begin to feel a deeper sense of responsibility for motivating students. They begin to talk but they need practice and peer coaching.

Quadrant 2: Changes in Content Approaches
Teachers become more aware of the fragmentation of the curriculum and then turn to concepts that connect several ideas together.

Quadrant 3: Changes in Strategies for Mastery
At this stage we check the validity of the content we are being asked to master. Students begin to question and transfer what they are learning into their own lives.

Quadrant 4: Changes in Evaluation Techniques
Students need to accept greater responsibility for self-evaluation. We must teach high standards for original and creative work and hold them to this requirement. Responsibility for learning shifts from the teacher to the student.

24. O'Neil, John. (1990) Making sense of style. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

O'Neil raises the issue of Learning Styles and whether it is valid or not. He feels interest in Learning Styles is due to the current individualized approach in education, and is another way of reaching students to keep them in school. The problems are that style theorists have many different opinions but schools using this approach still claim that using one or a combination does allow children to succeed.

Andrews, a principal states, "We had to look at ourselves and it really opened our eyes". O'Neil sees some practical obstacles with Learning Styles. A major issue is matching instruction to style.

1) Use of tests to prescribe
2) Others will say it labels
3) Place matched teachers to students
4) Gregorc feels students "might not put down their true position; they put down the socially acceptable one."...

Gregorc feels meeting styles will cause teacher burnout and that we should use teacher teams.

Dunn strongly feels it's necessary to identify style through assessment tools. Others feel teachers have a duty to "stretch" outside their styles while planning lessons, to explain concepts several different ways. But it's equally important to help students "stretch" by learning through other styles.

O'Neil closes with several theorists stating that the movement is there, may never catch on due to disagreements, but will probably never die because it has some truth in it.

25. Orsak, Lara. (1990) Learning styles versus the Rip Van Winkle Syndrome. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

A teacher with 20+ years of experience is sent to New York for a Learning Styles Conference. A statement made by the presenter that Rip Van Winkle would not see any difference in how school was taught shocked this teacher into change. She returned to school and applied Learning Styles approach to her teaching. By the third year she was the curriculum coordinator. In two pilot programs they have taken two groups of at-risk kids and have had 99-100% passing marks.

After five years she knows there is a more successful way to teach. As well, teacher satisfaction that the students are more successful and that the dropout rate has declined speaks for Learning Styles.

26. Pearson, William A. (1990) Implementing a Learning Style Approach to Hoben Elementary School. The Developer. National Staff Development Council. March.

Following Bernice McCarthy's 4MAT system teachers completed a Learning Styles Inventory. Workshops were presented to the staff at four half day inservices throughout September - January. Peer Coaching was provided in the format of one resource teacher, a learning specialist and a teacher. Students were assigned to math according to their learning styles and with the appropriate teacher. Parents were informed by letter and they enjoyed this. The Iowa Test for Basic Skills was used for pre- and post-testing purposes. Gains were noted above what was usually expected.

27. Perrin, Janet. (1990) The learning styles project for potential dropouts. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No.2. October.

Amityville High School started a Learning Styles Project aimed at potential dropouts. Students were selected at the end of ninth grade based on three criteria:

1) Failure in 2-3 subjects
2) Scores in the fifth stanine or below
3) Excessive absences.

Teachers were trained in the Dunn and Dunn model. They introduced learning styles and began experimenting with various instructional methods. The Learning Styles Inventory was given and the printouts used to plan lessons, counselling strategies, and for teaching the students about themselves. Students were not comfortable at first, but after three years, only one dropped out and more than half of the students applied to colleges. Achievements are easy to calculate but gains in self-esteem are immeasurable.

28. Sykes, Susan, and Others. (1990) Partners in Learning Styles at a Private School.

Blake Middle School adopted the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model five years ago. The result has been to form a better relationship between parents/students/school. Students are more aware of what they need in order to learn better. Greater flexibility has emerged as a result of their awareness of learning styles.

Now, students may meet course requirements by choosing to write papers, give presentations, or create visual or kinaesthetic projects. Teachers are more sensitive and have many ways to deal with situations. Students are now viewed as an asset to the school.

29. Thousand, Jacqueline, S. Ph.D., and Richard A. Villa, Ed.D. (1988) Enhancing Success in Heterogeneous Classrooms and Schools. Center for Developmental Disabilities; University Affiliated Program, Burlington, Vermont.

The purpose of this paper is to identify and describe those practices which appear to be associated with successful schooling of students in heterogeneous groupings. The schools are comprehensive, have good leadership and inservices.

Instructional Practices:

A. Outcomes-Based Instructional Models

1) Diagnostic procedures -- determine if students have prerequisites
2) Create anticipation -- brief description
3) "Best Shot" Instruction -- select and implement strategies which they feel will enable all students to learn
4) Guided Practice
5) Formative assessment
    a) Reteach if necessary
    b) Enrichment
6) Summative Assessments

B. Peer Power
Use of peer tutoring and peer buddies. Benefits of the above are as follows: significant academic gains, positive personal relationships, positive role models and success

C. Cooperative Education promotes higher achievement than competitive or individually structured learning experiences. Higher self esteem and positive relationships are some of the benefits

D. Redefining roles. Teacher who has expertise in ... rather than Special Education. Collaboration is the key to successfully meeting the educational needs of any student.

30. Volk-Hilgerson, Karin. (1987) Celebrating students' diversity through learning styles. Oregon School Study Council, Vol. 30, No. 9. May.

Chapter one summarizes the major finding of Learning Styles Research and describes Learning Styles as unique internal processes that guide how we take in information. Dunn, Samples, Gregorc see education turning to individualization. McCarthy feels learners should be taught to adapt to all styles.

Chapter two discusses how Oregon educators have responded to Learning Styles. It is believed that a "paradigm shift" must occur. Students should have a say in education. Jim Gomery, Oregon's Learning Styles Association President, states that TAG teachers use learning styles a great deal. He states:

1) Inservice
2) Extra time to develop new technique (Peer Coaching)
3) Administrative Support

Chapter three recommends desirable practices that arise from this investigation.

1) Gain administrative endorsement (Director)
2) Gain active administrative support at the building level
3) Coordinate preservice training for teachers
4) Encourage teachers to apply learning styles
5) Involve parents and students in learning styles efforts
6) Continue to develop a research base.

31. Vontobel, Roy. (1989) Two ways of knowing. Caribou News, Vol. 9, No. 2. August.

Vontobel points out the difference of learning styles between the European-derived traditional learning and the Native learner. Both cultures may know a great deal about science but one is based on survival and the other is a need to know. Everyone learns but focuses on what is important to his own way of life. One kind of knowledge is not simply better or worse -- just different.

32. Weber, Patricia and Fred Weber. (1990) Using 4MAT to improve student presentations. Educational Leadership, Vol. 48, No. 2. October.

This is an excellent article explaining how an enrichment class was taught to give better oral presentations using the 4MAT systems. The students brainstormed the ideal learning situation based on experience. They were given the Learning Styles Inventory. The students were then taught the four basic styles using a 4MAT wheel.

Students then began an Independent Research Project of personal interest. They had to plan and teach a lesson using the 4MAT wheel. During the lesson, students and teachers filled in a wheel with comments. A party was held upon completion of all lessons and all students completed another sheet on "If I could do it again".

33. Curriculum Rationale. (1989) Reprinted from: Unity in Diversity Curriculum Guide. Four Worlds Development Project. Lethbridge, Alberta.

There has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of minority group children in the total North American school population. Teachers struggle to meet the needs and now is the time to question the appropriateness of some of the curriculum content. This article states a climate of acceptance of individual differences would be essential. "Unity in Diversity" is a program which attempts to provide a balanced approach to multicultural education. Seventeen teaching strategies have been identified and guidelines to each are provided. Teachers are encouraged to try the different strategies.

34. Developing Classroom Strategies "Be". Native Awareness Workshop Leader's Guide.

This approach recommends that you should be a communicator. We should talk to students, parents, and the community. We should share and discuss each student's potential.

1) Be flexible -- use different learning styles
2) Be informal -- multiculturalism
3) Be analytical -- check sources over
4) Be effective
5) Be sensitive -- accept differences
6) Be positive
7) Be a bridge builder -- seek commonalities, not differences
8) Be patient.

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5. Canadian Living: January 1990, April 1990 and July 1990.

MATHEMATICAL LITERACY: IT'S FOR EVERYONE

Kerry Black
Karen Demassi
Louise Novinger-Grant

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The term mathematical literacy is considered to be the ability to use mathematical skills, knowledge and processes at a level commensurate with one's needs and aspirations (National Research Council, 1980). The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1989) addresses the need in today's society for teaching goals to reflect the importance of mathematical literacy. These five goals, believed to foster mathematical literacy, are that students:

1. Learn to value mathematics
2. Become confident in their ability to do mathematics
3. Become mathematical problem solvers
4. Learn to communicate mathematically
5. Learn to reason mathematically

As reported in the research addressing language and learning (Graves, 1984; Brittain, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978), writing is fundamental to the development of thinking and understanding. Writing about a mathematical activity requires that children reflect on, analyze and synthesize ideas and information in a way that is personally meaningful (Burns, 1988; Samuels, 1988). The metacognitive processes by which the individual child develops an understanding of a mathematical concept are revealed through written response. This writing provides insight into the child's thinking and reasoning which has implications for assessment, as the teacher is able to ascertain each child's strengths and areas of need.

The research reported in this paper is based on the premise that writing necessitates a conceptual understanding. Children engage in oral rehearsal inspired by an activity within a mathematical language-rich environment prior to their written response. We acknowledge that children use oral language to construct mathematical meaning. However, in this project, we focused our observations on written response. It is not our intent to reduce mathematical literacy to written expression. We are cognizant that mathematical literacy is multifaceted.

PURPOSE

The study was designed to examine children's emerging mathematical literacy in relation to functional, everyday mathematics. Through the use of learning logs, children of different ages with varying needs (including those children identified as having learning difficulties) recorded their thoughts, ideas and understandings about activities within a measurement unit. Parents wrote in a dialogue journal about their observations of their child's involvement in the measurement unit. They shared their experiences based upon interactions with their child in the home. From the writings of children and parents, it was possible to gain insight into the development of abilities associated with the goals of mathematical literacy.

METHODOLOGY

Context

This case study was conducted in an integrated, multiaged grouping of 7, 8, 9 and 10 year olds including 12 children identified as having learning difficulties. The children were from a varied socio-economic area. A total group of 70 children participated in the project. However, 12 children and their parents were identified for the purpose of this study.

The project focused on the math strand of measurement for six weeks. The unit was comprised of daily reading of fiction or non-fiction literature (Appendix A) that illustrated the concepts presented, the history of measurement, purpose of measurement, vocabulary development, non-standard measure and instruction in the areas of time, money, linear, mass and capacity. (See Appendix B.) The unit culminated with ten activity based centres (see Appendix C) that presented real life situations in which to apply the concepts presented.

During the unit, children kept daily logs of their understanding of measurement. Teachers responded individually to students' written comments, creating a dialogue which acknowledged, encouraged and probed children's entries. In addition to written responses, audiotapes were used to tape oral discussions between children and teacher.

We began this project with a general orientation evening for parents. We explained the focus of the research and invited parents to participate with their child in this project. We outlined their involvement as keeping a journal of their child, discussing the daily math activities in school, looking for natural, everyday application of the concepts presented and returning the journal back to the school as frequently as possible.

At this orientation, we provided parents with a dialogue journal which included a tentative schedule of topics and the dates that they would be addressed (Appendix C) as well as possible response lead-ins to get them started (Appendix D). We also brainstormed activities parents could do with their child such as baking or building. We invited parents to contact us if they encountered difficulty with the project. We celebrated the end of the project with a family evening during which children and their parents participated in the measurement activity centres.

Throughout the six weeks, we responded to both the child's learning log and the parent's dialogue journal. To maintain the child's enthusiasm and inform the parents, we published three newsletters which included children's responses, parents' journal comments and insights into successful activities.

Data Collection

We gathered data from the twelve project children and their families in the following five areas:

- the daily mathematics log of each child (approximately three entries weekly)
- observation of children during measurement activities and discussions
- dialogue journals with families involved in the study, as well as with families expressing an interest in the project
- evaluations from children and parents
- interviews with the children involved in the study.

Mathematics Learning Logs

At the conclusion of daily activities, we encouraged the children to record their thoughts, insights and observations. We responded daily to the children's comments in a dialogue format. These responses were reflective in nature which acknowledged, questioned and encouraged further thought and explanations. At five of the centres we included an open-ended lead question intended to focus the children's response.

Observation During Activities

As part of the regular evaluation process, we observed and made anecdotal notes about the children while they were engaged in the activities.

Dialogue Journals

Initially, twenty-seven families took home dialogue journals, having expressed an interest in the project at the orientation evening. Of these interested families, nineteen were regularly involved. We responded to the parent entries in a reflective manner, affirming their comments, suggesting further activities and reinforcing their participation. The twelve project children and their families were identified only to us.

Evaluations from Children and Parents

At the end of the unit, children completed a self-evaluation by responding to four questions that asked what they felt they learned, remaining questions they had, the purposes for measurement and an illustration of measurement.

All parents were invited to evaluate the unit. This evaluation contained areas they enjoyed, problems encountered, insights and suggestions. Since the evaluations were completed anonymously it is difficult to ascertain whether the study group is represented. However, some of the study parents identified their evaluations.

Interviews with Children

Children were interviewed to determine their feelings about the project, their preferred activities and their parents' involvement.

These methods of data collection provided a natural means of gathering information in the context of the classroom and afforded a broad spectrum of situations in which to observe mathematical literacy. Application of our findings to other situations is possible by this use of broad spectrum data collection.

FINDINGS

Children's Learning Logs

During the course of this project, all children in the classroom were asked to record their observations in their learning log. Children were encouraged to use pictures or diagrams (in addition to written work) to illustrate their understandings and explorations. The findings reported here are from the twelve project students.

Children responded in their logs approximately three times a week. The children's logs became a dialogue between the teacher and the child. For the purpose of publication we have edited the children's writing mechanics for spelling and punctuation. The child's intent has remained intact.

Children's logs were used to record their discoveries about measurement. They were able to write and illustrate their new found knowledge and contrast it to formerly held beliefs or previous experiences. They recorded their estimates, comparisons and surprises. Generally, the log comments were brief and clustered in the following areas: exploring, questioning, clarifying and sharing.

Exploring

The area of exploring was clearly evident in many of the children's responses. A child illustrates this in the comment:

> Today we did capacity. I found out about volume. That volume is not only sounds.

Another child writes:

> How much juice. I guess 50 ml. It was 75. I picked the biggest. It has 75 ml in our orange.

The teacher responded: "What surprised you about this centre?"

> Child: Well, I thought that they had the same amount of juice in them too.

Another child states:

> Today we measured mass. We had to measure things like raisins, books, our shoes, paper clips and pencils. Most of the things were grams!

Another child commented:

> We ordered different cans by size. Then I filled a can there by 5 cm. It took 50 of them. Then I filled a container that had 1000 ml with a scoop that had 25 ml. It took about 1000 scoops.

These comments indicated that the learning log for the children was used as a vehicle to explore their ideas and thoughts about the math task.

Questioning and Clarifying

Interestingly, throughout the journals the children were using mathematical language to describe and clarify their understandings, to answer structured and self-generated questions. A child illuminates this observation with the comment,

> I like this activity but I didn't put too much things in a litre. Then I was thinking of Safeway because it has the most litres and millilitres.

Built into the unit was the concept of estimating. Many of the instructional and centre activities were organized so that the child had to estimate before actually measuring. The children wrote about their estimates. Many questioned how accurate or inaccurate they were from their actual measurement. A child reports,

> My estimate is 50 ml. I think it is that much. I was right 50 ml.

Another child writes,

> My estimate is 15 mins. The actual time was 3 min. and 42 seconds.

Or,

> I think there is 100 ml in my orange. One orange was 49 ml.

The children used comparison to self-check and reach conclusions about problems encountered during activities. A child writes:

> I knew that if something is twice as big as another because (if something) it takes twice or 4 times as much as another bottle. (It is) because it is half of the big bottle.

Or another child,

> I was trying to find something twice as big.

And yet another child,

> It took 50 ml 10 times to fill the Coke bottle.

The children were beginning to expand their new found knowledge and started to question how it could be transferred to new situations. A child writes,

> I had a long 2m strip. I even put the little cm on the strip. I could use smaller events like decimetres, inches, centimetres, metre, km, miles.

Sharing

All of the children shared their ideas in both written and oral form. Many of the children used charts, diagrams and pictures to complement their written work. This was another way for the children to share their understandings with others. Many of the illustrations showed the children involved in actual measurement situations. They were able to show themselves using measurement devices. Interestingly, all illustrations portrayed happy children.

Parent Dialogue Journals

Parents wrote in their dialogue journals approximately twice a week for the duration of the project. In most cases, the journals were written in by one parent following discussion and activities with their child. Occasionally, the children wrote about their home activities. One family used the journal as a place for written dialogue between parent and child. The responses clustered around four general categories: exploring, questioning, clarifying and sharing experiences.

Exploring

All the journal responses revealed a heightened awareness of the use of measurement in daily activities. Parents recorded their observations of various measurement situations within their daily routines. For examples, a parent wrote:

> My child has been swimming at the Foothills Pool and knew that the pool is 25 metres long. From that measurement, my child was able to estimate the length of the University pool and it was right on -- 50 metres!

A child wrote:

> The man on the news measures rain and snow with millimetres. My mom buys sugar in kg. My dad buys peanuts in grams, new born babies are weighed in grams. My uncle uses kgs to buy feed for his farm animals.

Questioning

The response journals served as a vehicle for parents to articulate their child's confusion and/or questions regarding a particular activity. The parents asked questions about the purpose or intent of an activity and the instructional sequence. In response to the clock activity, a parent wrote:

> My child did the clocks and calendar centre today but didn't understand what to do. The child took some parts and made a "thing a majigy" that moved. My child thought the thing made was neat but didn't really see the tie-in with measurement and I didn't really either. Maybe you can offer a clue?

Clarifying

The parents' entries in the response journals included highlights of home discussions about measurement and associated activities. It was evident that parents were clarifying, reinforcing and extending the concepts addressed in the classroom. In addition, parents' entries referred to the connections they made between the areas of measurement and their everyday life. This is illustrated by a parent who wrote:

> We are not sure what non-standard measurement actually is. (My child just recalled what it is!) Scissors, (and I just read the newsletter!) erasers, paper clips, yarn, balls, bingo chips were used to measure things like a pencil.

A dialogue between parent and child centred around time and cooking:

Child: When my Grandma was over we had hot dogs for lunch. Grandma put four hot dogs in the microwave for 5 minutes. They tasted chewy, really chewy dry too. Then my mom told me we were only s'pose to put them in for two minutes.

Parent: How long would you cook 1 hot dog for the microwave?

Child: Half a minute.

Parent: Good! You can make lunch on Saturday. Goodnight.

Sharing Experiences

Through the response journals, parents and children had the opportunity to share their experiences with measurement, whether encountered at some previous time or motivated by discussion generated by classroom activities. We were privy to a delightful account of the exchanges that went on at home! Several parents discussed their child's developing understanding of conservation of liquid (Piaget, in Pulaski, 1980) as their child prepared and measured quantities of juice in various containers:

> My child liked working with math tubs today they estimated how much juice they would squeeze from an orange and my child estimated correctly. My child is going to estimate how much juice goes into a drinking glass. My estimate is: 10 ml. The correct estimate was: 6 ml. Now my child is going to estimate if the same amount of juice will fit into a tall, thin wine glass. My estimate is: No, not all. The glass held all the juice almost to the top. (My child) learned from this that the glasses were different size and shape but held almost the same amount of juice. The short fat glass could hold a little more. At first my child thought the wine glass did until we poured the juice back from the short glass to the tall one.

Some parents alluded to their own confusion between metric and imperial measure.

One parent wrote:

> We don't have a scale at home. We measure some thing at the store, others came already weighed. The things we measure in grams are solid, they are not liquid. Sometimes for the same weight we have different quantities (volume).

Children's Evaluations

The children completed an evaluation at the end of the unit. To be consistent with the writing focus, a similar approach was used in the evaluation. The evaluation consisted of four open-ended questions.

Project children reported that mass, cooking activities and money were the areas in which they learned the most. It is important to note that the project children mentioned these areas, as they strongly reflect reported home activities. Most of the project families explored the home environment for mass and capacity of food products and were involved in cooking activities. At home, they noted package weights and volumes. Parents highlighted the use of money in everyday situations (allowances, food purchases). In contrast, non-project children felt that the areas of measurement they learned most about were linear measurement and mass.

Overall, our project children felt that they had few unanswered questions at the end of the unit. Some of the questions that did remain were about historical aspects of measurement, such as why measurement changed to metric and who invented measurement. In contrast, non-project children had questions about specific skill areas as well as historical aspects of measurement.

In response to the question "Why do we need to measure?", project children commented:

- to make your meaning clear
- to see how big things are (your car, clothing, height and pet)
- to have things come out even (building)
- so you aren't cheated (with change at the store)
- to see how much you need (baking).

All of the project children were able to give at least one everyday application of measurement. In contrast, some non-project children responded to this question with detached answers such as:

- you'll need it when you're an adult
- to find out
- it is part of everyday life
- lists of the skill components of measurement such as linear, height, width.

Many of the non-project children made connections which clearly reflected the measurement activities that were part of the classroom unit. These responses were:

- for baking
- to see how tall you are
- to see how long you need to be at school
- to see how much money you'll need (at McSchool's).

Our final question asked the children to illustrate measurement. In response to this question, we found that half of the project children placed themselves in the picture, actively involved in a measurement task of some sort. Fewer than one-third of non-project children placed themselves in the picture illustrating their view of measurement. Many of the pictures showed some form of linear measurement for both groups of children.

Parent Evaluations

The parents responded positively to this project. Their comments reflected a feeling of wanting to be part of their child's education in a meaningful way.

The parents indicated that the most enjoyable aspects of this unit were the hands-on activities incorporated in the measurement unit, the practical activities which extended into home and school and the opportunity to work with their child. One parent said,

> We enjoyed being able to work with our child, sharing what was learned at school and showing my child how to use that knowledge at home.

Parents commented often that they found the family involvement in the unit to be the most interesting and surprising aspect of the study. One parent commented favourably about:

> The whole notion of the parent/student partnerships working together.

Parents were surprised that they could experience mathematics as fun, enjoyable, practical and connected to everyday life. They noted that their children shared this view. One parent illustrated this by writing:

> My child makes more observations now about things (weights, mass and linear mean something). My child can identify and relate to the environment and surroundings, more so than I believe my child would have otherwise. Furthermore we are more aware and try to point out things such as how many km to a town we're travelling to...How much is in the cereal box, how much is in the rice bag...Thank you for opening our eyes and we'll continue to make observations and notice what we take for granted.

Most of the parents felt that the greatest positive influence of the project was the time that the family spent together involved in school related activities. A parent reiterates:

> This project gave us the opportunity to be involved in our child's daily education. The more time we spent, the more our child opened up about the school day -- telling us things that probably would not have been mentioned

> before. It was also worthwhile in that we have always told our child how important school is but this gave us a chance to sit down with our child and show our child.

Parents were enthusiastic about the parent night which culminated the measurement unit. During this evening, we invited families to work together at the measurement centres. Not only was this an enjoyable evening but many parents made a point of telling us how much they appreciated having their child guide them through the centres, demonstrating their measurement connections.

In response to the question, "What obstacles did you encounter?", two parents mentioned difficulty writing in the dialogue journal. A parent commented that:

> Without the outline, the biggest obstacle would have been just getting started.

Another parent was concerned about what we expected in the journal. Project parents were willing to write in the dialogue journals as part of their involvement. The degree to which writing was a negative influence on parent participation (due to the risks involved in writing) is difficult to ascertain.

A majority of parents commented that they would like to see this home school journal project included in other units of study. Parents wanted to be involved in their child's education and they found this to be a meaningful way in which to do so.

In this project, we recognized the teaching and learning that parents do at home and facilitated parent voice in the education process. Parents felt a partnership in learning. This could not be accomplished without providing a "space" for parent input. The dialogue journal recognized the contributions parents make in the educational process and provided an important link extending beyond school.

Audiotape/Interviews

In order to further our understanding of the project, we asked the project children who participated to identify the aspects of the project they liked and disliked.

Most of the children enjoyed the home-school journal. A child commented: "It was good because the teachers get to learn what you did at home". Another child noted: "It was a lot of fun". One child felt the responsibility of carrying the notebook back and forth regularly, and commented "it made my backpack kind of heavy".

There were favourable comments from all of the activities done with families at home. Each child was able to recount at least one enjoyable activity done at home. For one student, making a pitcher of juice was memorable. For another, measuring the water needed to fill the sink for dishes was significant (although doing the dishes was not as much fun, we're told). A child who was a big hockey fan enjoyed finding the metric dimensions of a hockey rink. One child enjoyed doing some baking. These comments reflect a universal ability of the families involved to take the idea of measurement and individualize it for each child involved, in a way which is difficult to accomplish in a school setting. The chosen activities were fun, practical, unique and memorable for each child interviewed.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF MATHEMATICAL LITERACY

Separating the impact upon the child from teaching practice and/or the home in a project such as this is virtually impossible. We structured this unit of study in such a way as to build strong links between home and school. By doing so, the child guides the curriculum as well as the home activities for teacher and parent. We cannot discuss each contributor in isolation, but rather view child, parent and teacher as integral to the development of mathematical literacy.

We have discovered that our measurement unit, with all of its' components, helped children to see themselves as being successfully engaged in mathematics. During this unit and in subsequent units, we continue to see our children as active learners, making links between mathematics and everyday life. The children have experienced their parents' involvement in their education. And together, they are further pursuing the goals associated with mathematical literacy.

We have begun to recognize some of the processes which our students utilize in their quest for mathematical literacy: exploring, questioning, clarifying and sharing. We have come to know our children and their understanding of measurement better. Our knowledge leads us to be more aware of these processes in other curricular areas.

The parent component proved to be the most rewarding part of the project. A trusting relationship was developed between home and school and the benefits continue to be realized. Open lines of communication were established, and parents assumed a critical role in the home school partnership whose common goal is the individual development of the child (Dickson, 1989). Because the parents were constructively involved in their child's education, the child's learning was enhanced. Our children ultimately benefit from this mutual cooperation, trust and respect. The creation of a trusting dialogue early in the school year helped us set a positive classroom climate, get to know parents quickly and begin a cooperative education process.

It is evident from the parents' interactions with their child that they play a vital role in fostering mathematical literacy. The dialogue journals reveal similar processes with regard to parents' involvement. Their writings demonstrated ways in which they were involved in measurement as they explored ideas, asked questions, extended and shared ideas with their children. The parents were able to personalize their child's learning, making everyday connections. Through measurement related activities, the child's mathematical literacy was nurtured. Children learn to value the use of measurement in functional, daily activities. Their confidence was enhanced as they made sense of information and tried their hand at measuring in various situations. In this project, parents' input (ideas, suggestions, activities undertaken) was valued and encouraged. Their contributions were recognized and they had a genuine voice in addressing mathematical literacy within the area of measurement. Further, the parents' writings provided valuable insight into the child's learning style, areas of strength or need and likes and dislikes.

As teachers, we discovered that the opportunity to step back from our daily practice and reflect on the impact of our instruction helped us grow. The chance to collaborate collegially as we investigated classroom happenings afforded us time to examine closely our students' progress and mathematical connections.

The use of case study as a research method offers valuable insights into the role teachers play in classroom research. We see our beliefs in our classroom curriculum, embedded in everyday situations. The way we structure our classroom environment reflects our beliefs in practice. We see ourselves in a dual role; creating classroom learning and then stepping away from that environment to begin to ascertain the effects on our students. In this way, we assume an agent-central role in our research as described by Clandinin (1986). We further view our role as researchers as an integral part of learning, for ourselves, our children and parents. As educators, we have a role to play in directing future research, guiding practice and theory in education.

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APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

Measurement Centres

Centre 1. Wrap It Up - **Linear Measurement**

At this tub, children estimate how much wrapping paper will be required to wrap a small, medium and large size box. They then wrap them up with wrapping paper. Estimates and exact measurements are recorded in their math books.

Centre 2. Orange Juice - **Capacity**

At this tub, children estimate how much juice one orange will yield. They squeeze the orange and determine the exact measurement. Estimates and exact measurements are recorded in their math books. Exact measurements are also recorded on a large graph. They then get to drink the juice.

The second activity at this tub involves students marking a job to show graduated measurement. Together children decide on the increments depending on the size of the jar they are using.

Centre 3. Popcorn - **Time**

At this tub, children estimate how much time it will take to pop 250 ml. of popcorn in a hot air popper. Estimates and actual results are recorded in their math books. While they are enjoying popcorn, children can make a digital watch or play a time concentration/memory game.

Centre 4. Muffins - **Mass**

At this tub, the children bake pumpkin muffins. They must first divide the recipe in half and then measure the necessary ingredients. Of course, they get to eat the results of their efforts!

Centre 5. McSchool's - **Money**

At this tub, a restaurant is set up using McDonald's products. The children take turns being the customers and the employees at McSchool's. Students must rely on each other to prepare and organize proper food to be delivered on trays to their customers. All money transactions are recorded in their math books.

Centre 6. Linear - **U.E.S. Olympics**

At this tub, children use adding machine tape to mark off two metre strips into decimetres. They then participate in a number of group activities using this strip (e.g. measuring how long their stride is, how far they can jump). Results are recorded in their math books.

Centre 7. Litre - **Capacity**

At this tub, children order five containers from smallest to largest. They then use the water table and measuring tools to see if they lined the containers up correctly. Their work is recorded in their math books.

Centre 8. Calendar - **Time**

At this tub, children are involved in a variety of activities that require them to reference a calendar. They also have the opportunity to take apart and put back together an actual clock and try to figure out what makes it tick. Work is recorded in their math books.

Centre 9. Fruit Salad - **Mass**

At this tub, children weigh and measure their own fruit to make a group fruit salad. They estimate how much a certain piece of fruit will weigh and they also try to figure out how much it will measure out to be in millilitres. Estimates and actual results are recorded in their math books. Yes, they get to eat the fruit salad!

Centre 10. Happy Birthday - **Money**

At this tub, children choose an envelope. Inside each envelope is a birthday card from their grandmother along with cash to spend. They may be allowed to spend it any way they wish or their grandmother may have asked them to spend it in a particular way. The children look through catalogues and make their purchases. Other members help students decide on the appropriateness of their choice. Work is recorded in their math books.

APPENDIX C

Tentative Unit Plan -- Measurement

Approximate Dates	Topic
September 12	History of Measurement
September 13	Why Measure?
September 14	Language Development (Webbing)
September 17	Non-Standard Measurement
September 18	Instruction: Time
September 19	Instruction: Time
September 20	Instruction: Money
September 21	Instruction: Linear Measurement
September 24	Instruction: Linear Measurement
September 25	Instruction: Mass
September 26	Instruction: Mass
September 27	Instruction: Capacity
October 1 - 19	10 Centres (being time, money, linear, mass, capacity)

Math Project -- Timeline

September 11	Begin Study
September 19	After "Meet the Teacher Night" 8-9 p.m. to answer any questions
September 17	Newsletter #1
October 9	Newsletter #2
October 22	Celebration - Sharing Data - Project Completion
October 24	Newsletter #3

APPENDIX D

Possible Ideas to Get Started in the Journal

Compared to ...

The best part ...

Similarly ...

Does this mean ...

I'm stuck on ...

The best way to think about this ...

I understand, but ...

I'm concerned about ...

A question I have is ...

If I had a choice ...

My picture of this is ...

A diagram of this idea looks like ...

I feel like ...

A connecting idea is ...

If this was a book, I'd title it ...

I think this applies to ...

Suppose ...

Imagine ...

What if ...

I predict ...

How about ...

It seems important to note ...

The best ...

Another way of saying this is ...

I learned ...

I discovered ...

K. V. LITERACY PROFILE PROJECT

John Calder
Carl Killen
George McCaffrey

Research in any field is based on certain presuppositions which are, themselves, dependent upon the experience and interests of the researcher involved. So it has been with us. As educators working at the secondary level we have, for many years, been participants in and privy to innumerable discussions focusing on what is felt to be the appalling state of literacy among many of our students. As is also often the case, speculation concerning the causes of this state of affairs has been rampant. Our project was conceived and proposed because Canadian Teachers' Federation funding provided us with an opportunity to subject to some serious scrutiny a number of our most treasured assumptions. The title of our study is indicative of what our original, somewhat vague intentions have become. In the course of our research we have worked toward developing a profile of the student who has attained a literacy level consistent with age and grade and have tried to identify the factors in early childhood and subsequent experience that seem to have contributed to the student's attainment of such a level. In the course of arriving at the above we have developed a questionnaire which we feel, while imperfect, is a fair predictor of the level of success a student might expect to have in school. We further feel that our questionnaire is superior in many respects to scientific tests of literacy because it provides a picture/profile of the individual student that makes possible individual assessment and strategies for intervention and promotion of literacy at the elementary, junior high and secondary levels.

As the preceding paragraph implies, having arrived at the necessary conclusion of our project, we find that what we have ended up with is both more and less than what we originally conceived. It is less in that, while we have some very specific recommendations to offer, our original desire to have strategies exclusively applicable to secondary concerns has been sidetracked. It is more in that we have identified factors we feel are important in the life of any child of any age who might hope to attain both scholastic success and the literacy level attendant upon the same.

Our initial efforts at developing a questionnaire involved identifying as many things as we could that we felt had either a positive or negative impact on literacy. Our assumptions covered a broad spectrum: availability of a variety of reading materials in the home; early exposure to a public library; experiences with television and other media; variety of early experiences with language, both written and oral; our perceptions of family interaction; early exposure to family members who modeled reading as an enjoyable experience; the student's reading and writing experiences outside the school environment; the student's perception of various early experiences with language. Working from these assumptions, we developed version #1 of our questionnaire and pre-tested it with a summer school class composed of academic and lower level Grade 10 English students. At this point we were unsure what to expect and were more interested in ensuring clarity than we were in reaching conclusions. We also became aware of the need to develop some method of scoring the questionnaires so that comparison would be possible. We began a process that would continue throughout our project of constantly scrutinizing individual questions in order to gain a sense of whether or not they were significantly discriminating. At the time of the writing of this report that problem remains a concern. We have continued to include questions which we feel, while not scorable for the purpose of differentiating among students, are, nevertheless, valuable for the sake of noting individual differences and rounding out the picture the profile provides for each student.

Our second version of the questionnaire was developed and proposed for the beginning of the school year in September. At this time we essentially expanded on what we had asked in Questionnaire #1. One of the most significant additions was a question which looked at early extra-curricular involvement among students. More on that when we come to results. At this time we also ordered the "Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests", scientific tests that we obtained for the purpose of comparison. We now had to make a decision regarding the composition of our test group. Our initial intention had been to randomly select 150 students and have them complete both our questionnaire and the Gates-MacGinitie test. We decided, however, that an easier and better way was simply to choose three classes, a 101, 102, and 103, and have them write the tests. This was done and we began the process of analyzing our assumptions in light of the results on both our test and the standardized one. Although there were anomalies, the results suggested to us that we were on the right track. Those students who scored well on our questionnaire had superior results on the standardized test as well. A similar correlation was apparent among low-scoring students. Prior to administering the questionnaire and tests, letters were sent to parents explaining what we were trying to do and soliciting their approval for their child's participation.

The final version of our questionnaire (see Appendix C) was prepared in light of the first two and our goal now was to fine tune. We dropped those questions that we felt were irrelevant and once again expanded and modified so that the questionnaire more adequately reflected our goals and expectations. In some instances, it was simply a matter of changing a word or a phrase while in others, a complete redrafting was required. The procedure was the same as the preceding administration although, necessarily, different classes were used as test subjects. Our analysis of the results is based on this final test group.

DESCRIPTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The scores assigned to different questions on the final version of the questionnaire are described below:

Questions 1-10 - These questions are primarily for the purpose of identification although we feel Question 9 in particular would allow for further investigation.

Questions 11-13 - We considered these questions as a unit and assigned one point for those students who enjoyed reading, perceived themselves as at least average readers and provided proof of their interest by indicating they had done some reading that was not required for school.

Question 14 - We asked this for interest's sake in order to gain a sense of whether or not there is a prevailing taste for certain types of reading material. No value was assigned to this question.

Questions 15-16 - These were considered as a unit. If students indicated they would pursue information through two or more of the avenues indicated in Question 16, they were given one point.

Question 17 - If students received and read a magazine or one newspaper and magazine, one point was given.

Question 18 - Subscription to a publication was given one point.

Question 19 - If a student had and used a library card, one point was given.

Question 20 - Whether or not you have given or received books was not important. If you did either often one point was assigned.

Question 21 - A response of yes was worth one if books were common in the home.

Question 22 - For the purpose of interest; no value was assigned.

Question 23 - A response of "very important" after they leave school, was worth one point.

Question 24 - If student considered reading an important life skill, a point was given.

Question 25 - If family usually sat together for meals, a point was given.

Question 26 - If the T.V. was never on during meals, a point was given.

Question 27 - A response of two hours or less of T.V. a day was worth one point.

Question 28 - If T.V. was "usually" discussed, a point was given.

Question 29 - If students were involved in non-school writing, a point was given.

Question 30 - If student was often read to, a point was given.

Questions 31-32 - The intention of this question was to determine if someone read to the student regularly. If there was evidence of that, one point was assigned.

Question 33 - If family stories were "often" told, a point was given.

Question 34-35 - We expected that all students had been exposed to T.V. in their pre-school years. If any kind of restrictions were placed on the student's viewing one point was given.

Questions 36-37 - We originally scored these questions about book ownership, but decided they were somewhat redundant in light of earlier questions along the same line.

Question 38 - Score one point if the library card was used frequently.

Question 39 - Score one point for "often" aware of family reading.

Question 40 - We included this question about pre-school education without being sure what we could do with it. It was not scored.

Question 41 - This is the only question with the potential for a negative score. If the response was "watch T.V." we subtracted one point. If the response was "spend time with an adult or child", one point was assigned.

Question 42 - If the student would "Ask the teacher for help" or "Talk it over at home", a point was given.

Question 43 - If, for a major project, the student would "Have help from a family member", a point was given.

Question 44 - If a student collected the works of an author, one point was given.

Question 45-46 - A yes to either or both questions about hobbies scored one point.

Question 47 - This question is one that survived all three versions of our questionnaire without being scored. We feel it has provided us with a sense of the kinds of experiences that can be helpful in a child's early years in developing literacy.

Question 48 - If the student read for his/her pleasure, a point was given.

Question 49 - If the child received a magazine subscription, a point was given.

Question 50 - If anyone regularly read to the child, one point was given.

Question 51 - This is another question on T.V. which we did not score yet kept through all three versions. We feel it has value but we are unsure how to assess that value.

Question 52 - Any two or more extra-curricular activities received one point.

Questions 53-54 - These are essentially information questions. No score was given.

ANALYSIS

For the purpose of analysis we chose the ten best and ten worst scores on the third version of our questionnaire. Appendix A presents a chart which provides the Gates-MacGinitie scores and ours and further shows the comparative results on those twelve points that we found either most discriminating or most interesting.

1. The first point we were happy to see upheld was the essential validity of our questionnaire in predicting literacy levels. As was mentioned earlier, there were anomalies, students whose scores on the standardized tests were totally inconsistent with their results on ours. These, however, were few. By far the majority of those students who were judged literate using our questionnaire also scored well on the standardized tests; the opposite is true as well. We feel our questionnaire, while in need of further refinement, is a useful tool for predicting a student's success in tasks in high school requiring language literacy.

2. Our rationale for looking only at the ten highest/ten lowest scores was that this would allow us to determine those factors which seem to play the greatest role in developing or hindering literacy among young people. It was at this point that our assumptions were put to the test. Appendix A indicates those questions we felt were most deserving of detailed analysis.

What results is a profile of the solid, literate student.

Questions 15, 16 -- Do you feel it is important to be well informed about world events? What steps would you take to be well informed about an important event?

Students who display an interest in world events and pursue such an interest through a variety of media seem more likely to develop literacy skills. The implications of this for the schools should be obvious. As many educators have already realized, the schools need to provide exposure not just to textbooks but to as many different information media as possible.

Question 17 -- List the magazines and newspapers that come into your home and check those you usually read.

Those students who grew up in an environment where print media were readily available in the form of subscriptions to magazines and newspapers, etc. seemed to have an advantage.

Question 19 -- Do you have a library card? If yes, how often have you used it in the last year?

The obtaining and using of a library card was one of the most discriminating questions. Of the top ten scorers on our questionnaire, eight of them owned and used library cards; among the bottom ten, none of them owned a card or, if they did, failed to use it. Whether this means that those who have library cards are literate already or that exposure to and use of libraries promotes literacy is unclear.

Questions 25, 26 -- Do you sit together as a family during meals? Is the T.V. or radio on during meals?

We were particularly interested in the role played by family interaction in promoting literacy and this was one of the questions designed to look at that. While not overwhelming, our results would seem to indicate that those families who sit down to meals without T.V. or radio have at least an improved chance of producing literate young people.

Question 27 -- How many hours of T.V. would you watch in a typical day?

The question of time spent watching T.V. was one thing we were most interested in exploring. Our results here are entirely inconclusive. We have not abandoned our belief that too much television viewing inhibits literacy; rather, we admit that we have been unable to determine what, precisely is too much. We picked the time 2 hours out of the air and as the graph shows, the results were too close to reach any valid conclusions.

Questions 30, 31, 32 -- In your pre-school years, did people read to you? Who was most likely to read to you? At what time of day were you read to?

Question 30 proved to be another very discriminating question. All those who scored well on our questionnaire had been read to regularly when young while only one of the low scorers had been. This points to the power of exposure and example which is further corroborated by Question 39.

Question 35 -- Were restrictions placed on your T.V. viewing?

This question, in our minds, sheds at least partial light on the problem we encountered in Question 27. Where the amount of time spent watching T.V. seemed insignificant, the placing of restrictions on viewing seemed to be a positive element in developing literacy.

Question 39 -- Do you remember being aware of other family members reading and enjoying books?

This, to us, was another very significant question. Those students who had the opportunity to see adults and others reading with enjoyment were more likely to attain higher levels of literacy.

Question 42 -- If you had a learning problem with school work would you most likely ask the teacher for help; talk it over at home; suffer in silence?

Those students who looked to adults for assistance in their school work and could depend on receiving it were more likely to score well overall.

Question 44 -- Did you ever collect books on a specific subject or by a specific author?

Interestingly, those students who found and followed a particular author were consistently among the top scorers. This may point to the need for quality reading material for all ages and attention being paid to the developing child's interests so that suitable material could be found and made available on request. Both school and public libraries could play a significant role in this regard.

Question 49 -- Did you receive any magazines regularly as a child?

This was another interesting result. Top scorers, by a margin of 8-2, subscribed to some kind of publication as pre-schoolers. Low scorers, in every instance, did not.

Question 52 -- What other activities did you participate in during your elementary years?

This question, included initially in our second version of the questionnaire, proved to be one of the most interesting. Without an exception, our top scorers are very involved young people. Most have belonged to some organization such as Brownies or Cubs and also been involved in organized sports, have taken music lessons and, generally, been active in many areas. The actively involved child would seem to be the most likely to attain an average or better than average level of literacy.

CONCLUSIONS

Admittedly our findings are based on a limited sample of student responses but they do serve to indicate some fairly clear directions we need to move in. Positive attitudes towards literacy develop in an atmosphere where the written word is both enjoyed and available. When the written word is supplemented by a strong oral tradition of story-telling and family history such an atmosphere is further enhanced. The literate young person has had positive experiences from an early age with family members who display an interest in the written and spoken word, are interested in the world generally, provide positive examples in regard to literacy and support for the child as he grows and learns, and who display an ongoing interest in the child's developing literacy skills. A variety of reading materials should be available at all times and efforts should be made to ensure that young children are made familiar with public and school libraries as soon as possible and encouraged to use them.

Family interaction would seem to be another key issue. Those parents who display an ongoing interest in their child's development in any number of areas are most likely to see their children develop substantial literacy skills. The literate young person has been exposed to a wide variety of activities and interests and has developed a positive self-concept as a result. Television will continue to spawn debate but the only thing we feel comfortable in saying is that some measure of control over viewing would seem to be essential. The literate young person has a positive regard for the written word and views reading as an essential life skill. Schools and parents and the community must all be involved in the development of such individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND STRATEGIES

1. Within our school we have devised a button campaign to promote both English and French literacy. Staff members and others are currently wearing buttons which read either "Read to Succeed" or "Lire pour Reussir". This has provoked many questions and caused a positive response. We feel such a campaign is a concrete and simple way to raise the profile of literacy needs in a positive, proactive manner.

2. We recognize that illiteracy is a problem that often is felt most acutely by those economically and socially disadvantaged. We have conceived of a pilot project called "Food for Thought" which would make available, through food banks, pre-school literacy kits. We feel this would address what we feel is essential -- a positive attitude toward literacy in the early childhood years. Such a campaign would be accompanied by posters and the like, and the solicitation of support from local literacy agencies, the business community and municipal and provincial governments.

3. Co-operation between public schools and public libraries must be promoted. Many students who scored poorly on our questionnaire regarded visits to the library (See Appendix B) as a negative experience. We feel this could be a result of such visits being simply to obtain a book and sit quietly and read. We feel public libraries, in co-operation with the schools, could develop programs which would include visits with authors, public readings, reading workshops and, undoubtedly, many other things. Students need to be introduced to the library as an active and vital place.

4. At the high school level, we would like to see our literacy profile questionnaire administered to all students upon entering Grade 10. A copy would be placed in the student's cumulative record. Literacy across the curriculum would be encouraged and subject teachers would be asked to promote reading in their particular subject area. Individual teachers would keep a record of what books a student was reading or had read and such information would be kept on file for the duration of the student's high school career. We feel this would further enhance the stature of literacy among our students by indicating that literacy is valued to the extent that all their teachers have a continuing interest in promoting and tracking their progress. Rather that being a vague, esoteric goal, literacy would be seen to have a high profile within the school. Our hope is that such attention would help overcome negative attitudes fostered by the individual student's early literacy experience.

APPENDIX A

SCORES G.M.*	Profile	World Events	Publi-cations in Home	Library Card	Meal Sans T.V.	2-Hrs T.V. or Less	Regularly Read To	Restric-tions on T.V.	Role Reading	Adult/ Child Time	Help with School	Author	Own Magazine	Activity
51	7	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
39	7	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
45	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
39	5	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
39	6	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
41	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
27	9	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
39	7	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	9	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL 2		3	4	0	5	7	1	3	2	2	4	2	0	
78	27	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
55	29	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
81	34	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
55	26	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
63	24	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
61	27	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
55	25	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
55	24	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
56	24	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
63	24	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
TOTAL		8	10	8	8	9	10	6	8	9	8	8	8	10

* Gates-MacGinitie Test

APPENDIX B

Several elementary school reading activities were rated by the students as negative, neutral or positive. We were surprised at the number of low readers who saw the class visit to the library as a negative experience.

Those scoring twelve points or less on our test rated their elementary library experience as follows:

G.M.	PROFILE	NEGATIVE	NEUTRAL	POSITIVE
38	7		1	
40	11		1	
43	12	1		
55	9		1	
51	7		1	
53	11	1		
52	10	1		
50	8	1		
52	12			1
50	8	1		
52	10	1		
53	11	1		
51	7			1
TOTALS		7	4	2

We need to explore the reasons why many weak readers find a visit to the library a negative experience.

APPENDIX C

K.V. LITERACY PROFILE

The purpose of this survey is to help the school serve you better.

It is our hope that by better understanding the reading background of students, we will be able to use the library and other resource material to strengthen literacy skills.

1. Name of student ______________________________
2. Age as of June 30th, ____________ Date of birth, ____________
3. Number of brothers and sisters __________
4. Names of parent(s) or guardian(s) ______________________
5. Jr. High attended ______________________
6. Last homeroom teacher ____________________
7. Last English teacher ____________________
8. Present English teacher ______________ English course taken ______
9. What level of French have you taken at school? __________
10. Elementary school(s) attended ______________________________
    ____
11. Do you enjoy reading? (underline) not at all; some; much
12. How would you rate yourself as a reader? (underline) weak; marginal; average, good, very good
13. How many books have you read in the last six months?
    fiction ______ non-fiction ____
    How many of these were not required reading for schools?
14. Name the last books you enjoyed reading that were not required reading in school
    ____
    ____
15. Do you feel it is important to be well informed about world events?
    (underline) yes, no

16. What steps would you take to be well informed about an important event? (underline) read a newspaper article? ____ listen to radio news ______? watch a TV documentary? _____ read a magazine article? ____ study a book on the subject? ____

17. List the magazines and newspapers that come into your home and check those you usually read

____

____

18. Have you ever subscribed to a publication? (underline) yes; no If so what?

____

19. Do you have a library card? (underline) yes; no

20. Do you receive books as presents? (underline) never; rarely; often
Do you give books as presents? (underline) never; rarely; often

21. Do you have books in your room at home? (underline) yes; no
How many? _______

22. What kind of reading is available in your home? (underline) books about sports; hobbies; cars; adventure; travel; other(list)

23. After you leave school how important do you think reading will be in your life? (underline) not important; marginally important; very important

24. In your professional life do you think reading well will be (underline) of no value; some value; of great value

25. Do you sit together as a family during meals? (underline) usually; rarely; never

26. Is the T.V. or radio on during meals? (underline) usually, rarely; never

27. How many hours of T.V. would you watch in a typical day? ______, a typical week? _____

28. Do you usually discuss what you watch on T.V.
with family? usually; rarely; never
with friends? usually; rarely; never

29. Underline the type of non-school writing you have done in the last six months personal letters; creative stories; business letters; reports; application forms; poetry

Pre-School Experiences

The following information will help us better understand how reading attitudes are developed in the early years. Answer the questions to the best of your ability.

30. In your pre-school years, did people read to you? (underline) yes; no
If yes how often? (underline) rarely; often

31. Who was most likely to read to you? ___________

32. At what time of day were you read to? ____________

33. Do you recall being told family history, ghost stories, fairy tales, etc.?
(underline) never; rarely; often

34. Did you watch T.V. in your pre-school years? (underline) yes; no

35. Were restrictions placed on your T.V. viewing? (underline) yes; no.
If yes, explain ____

36. Did you have your own books at this time? (underline) yes; no, a few; many

37. Did you receive books as gifts? (underline) yes; no

38. Did you have a library card? (underline) yes; no. Did you use it? rarely, frequently

39. Do you remember being aware of other family members reading and enjoying books?
(underline) yes; no; often; rarely

40. Before you entered Grade One did you attend any of the following? (underline)
1) day care; 2) play school; 3) kindergarten

Elementary School

41. In elementary school, when you returned home from school, would you most likely (underline) talk over the day with an adult; spend time with another child; watch T.V.

42. If you have a learning problem with school work would you most likely (underline) ask the teacher for help; talk it over at home; suffer in silence

43. If you had a major project in elementary school would you most likely (underline) work alone; have help from a family member

44. Did you ever collect books on a specific subject or by a specific author (underline) yes; no

45. Did you have a hobby that you shared with other family members? (underline) yes; no

46. Did you have a hobby that you enjoyed by yourself? (underline) yes; no

47. What is your memory of the following elementary school activities?

	negative	neutral	positive
Having the teacher read to you	( )	( )	( )
Listening to other students read	( )	( )	( )
Reading to the class	( )	( )	( )
Visiting the library	( )	( )	( )
Watching a film	( )	( )	( )

48. Did you read for your own pleasure during your years in Elementary School? (underline) yes; no

49. Did you receive any magazines regularly as a child? (underline) yes; no
If yes, list them ________________________________

50. Did anyone other than your teacher continue to read to you during these years? yes; no
If yes, who? ____________________________

51. How much T.V. did you watch during your elementary school years compared with the time spent watching before you entered school? (underline) same; more; less

How much T.V. did you watch during your elementary school years compared with now? (underline) same; more; less

52. What other activities did you participate in during your elementary years? (e.g. Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Little League, music lessons, church activities)
____

53. What reading experiences in elementary school did you find most helpful?
____

54. How do you think schools can help students become better readers?
____

Can you tell us if you found any of these questions unclear or hard to follow?

SUSTAINING THE JOY: A STUDY INTO ADOLESCENT ALITERACY

Susan M. Leppington

The goal of instilling in children the love of reading is central to most instructional programs. Reading for pleasure contributes significantly to overall learning success, and to reading achievement in particular, engaging both the cognitive and affective domains. Independent reading offers the benefits of greater knowledge, enhanced comprehension, a wider vocabulary and stimulates the thoughts and feelings of the reader. To appreciate and to experience these benefits is to be fully literate.

Research and common experience prove the validity of these statements, yet many people attach little importance to leisure reading. Although they have the facility to read, they take no pleasure in reading and seldom make the decision to read for recreation. Such people who are able to read but rarely choose to do so can be termed aliterate. "They scan magazines by looking at the pictures, do not read beyond the headlines on the front page of the newspaper, and never read novels or poetry for the pleasure they may offer." (Thimmesch, 1981, page ix) Aliteracy has far-reaching implications for the welfare of the individual and of society as a whole.

Both the popular press and reading experts have recognized aliteracy as a social phenomenon which demands attention. A recent Gallup poll (August, 1990) reported that 17% of Canadians over the age of 18 do not read a book at all in an average week whereas 33% of the sample spend more than 20 hours a week watching television. These figures, compounded with the rate of illiteracy in Canada (5 million according to a 1987 Southam News survey), provide cause for some alarm.

Carl Braun of the University of Calgary, in his inaugural message as President of the International Reading Association, wrote:

> *Contrary to the opinion of prophets of the 1960's, literacy is central to the well-being of the individual and perhaps to the survival of the "global village". More than ever, we recognize the potential of individuals to wield influence through "knowing" and the potential of individuals to gain control over their personal destinies. (IRA, 1990, p.3)*

A literate, informed citizenry is the underpinning of a democratic, progressive and responsive society. The participation of its members in the decision-making process hinges on their ability to read critically, to go beyond the explicit. Quoted in *U.S. News & World Report* (February, 1985) a Library of Congress study states that "we must face and defeat the twin menaces of illiteracy and aliteracy -- the inability to read and the lack of will to read -- if our citizens are to remain free and qualified to govern themselves".

Considering the proliferation of information in our society and the accelerated rate of technological change, workers must be capable of dealing with advanced texts and sophisticated written concepts. Unfortunately, however, aliterates ultimately lose many of the higher order skills associated with reading and, as a result of disuse, read without fluency, understanding or enjoyment.

Reading for pleasure as a recreational pursuit is pivotal to the development and retention of reading skill. Both developing and competent readers must encounter constant and meaningful opportunities to hone their craft and to experience reading as a satisfying and enjoyable activity. Yet young people in the intermediate grades (7 to 10) are often unlikely to read for pure enjoyment. Studies by Allington (1977), Chambers (1969) and by Gentile and McMillan (1977), have demonstrated that during this critical period of development the habit of reading for pleasure is often corroded and sometimes abandonned altogether. This situation may have lasting implications beyond the adolescent years as longitudinal studies (Himmelweit and Swift, 1976) over a twenty-year period have found that adolescent habits and attitudes predispose those of adulthood. Hence, the adolescent disinclined to read becomes the adult who can read but chooses not to -- an aliterate.

The purpose of this research project was to study the existence of aliteracy among adolescents, to investigate its causes and to suggest strategies that would minimize the long-lasting effects of this condition. The research was guided by the following set of questions:

1. Does the concept of reading for pleasure differ between junior (grade 5) and intermediate (grades 8 and 9) students?

2. What conditions influence the adolescent's interest in reading for pleasure?

3. Are there gender differences in reading habits and preferences at the intermediate level?

4. How can schools and families encourage intermediate students to develop and/or retain an interest in reading for pleasure?

METHOD

Sample

This research examined the reading habits, preferences and attitudes of students in Grades 5, 8 and 9. Grade 8 students were targeted as the major focus, using Grades 5 and 9 as points of comparison.

Based on the observations of 10 years as a teacher-librarian, the author has noted that students in grade 5 are, for the most part, eager readers. By this time, their reading ability has developed to the point where they are seeking opportunities to practise their skill. Their search for books reflects the widespread nature of their interests, ranging from the transient to the more enduring.

Students at the middle of the intermediate division, Grades 8 and 9, are more likely to display some impatience or even antipathy towards reading -- characteristic aliterate behaviour. (Trelease, 1985; Fader, 1976; Chambers, 1969) Changing roles, responsibilities, relationships and perspectives have a definite and often negative impact on the activities which adolescents once regularly enjoyed. Reading for pleasure is often seen to be "uncool" and is supplanted by more active, social pursuits.

A letter describing the research and requesting permission was sent to parents of the Grade 5, 8 and 9 students to be involved in the project. Only a small proportion of parents denied approval. The students, especially those in Grade 5, were enthusiastic about their participation.

Two-hundred and twenty-nine (229) students were surveyed over all. The total sample was 51 per cent boys and 49 per cent girls. At Linwood[1] school, all the Grade 5 (n=64) and Grade 8 (n=74) students were surveyed. One class of Grade 8 students (n=30) at Ashford school and sixty-one (61) Grade 9 Wakefield students were surveyed. The follow-up interviews were done with Grade 8 students from Linwood school.

Sites

The research was conducted at three schools in York Region, a sprawling area north of Metropolitan Toronto. Two schools, Linwood and Ashford, are kindergarten to Grade 8 schools. Both have enrolments over 600 students. Wakefield is a medium-sized secondary school, Grade 9 to OAC, having a population just below 900. The schools are approximately 8 kilometres apart and belong to different families of schools. Each school is situated within a suburban residential community of predominantly single-family dwellings. The students from the three schools are generally from middle-class homes. Each school has a heterogeneous cultural and ethnic mix.

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[1] Pseudonynms have been used for all proper names throughout this study.

DATA COLLECTION

Survey

The first phase of the research consisted of a three-page questionnaire (Appendix A). During May of 1990, the questionnaire was field-tested with one class of Grade 5 students and one Grade 8 class to ensure its clarity and comprehension, and to guage the efficacy of the questioning. With a few modifications, the questionnaire was given to students at all three grade levels in late October of 1990, when school was fully underway and students were focused on the academic year ahead. The terms "reading for pleasure", "leisure reading" and "recreational reading" were discussed with the students prior to the administration of the survey to assist in their understanding.

Interview

Personal interviews comprised the second stage of the research. In light of their responses to specific questions, fifteen Grade 8 students from Linwood were interviewed during November and December, 1990. The interviewed students indicated on the survey that they did not enjoy reading for pleasure or that they read less now than they did a year ago. Additional information was sought from these students to explain their dislike for reading, to account for their abandonment of reading for pleasure, and to ascertain the extent of their aliteracy.

The interviews were constructed around specific questions, yet were flexible enough to be spontaneous and responsive to individual statements.

Tracking of Library Use

The use of the school library as a source of recreational reading books by 53 Grade 5 students and 60 Grade 8 students was tracked for a six-week period during October and November of 1990. Although the students' actual visits to the library could not be monitored, it was possible to track the frequency and the extent of their book borrowing. The purpose of this tracking was to collect data related to the use of the library by junior and intermediate students.

RESULTS

The responses from the questionnaires were cross-tabulated by grade, gender and school. Open-ended questions requiring written responses from the students were recorded and tabulated anecdotally. In this section, the results of this study will be discussed in relation to each of the specific questions which guided the research. Findings from the three methods of data collection -- questionnaire, interview and tracking of library use will be described concurrently.

1. Does the concept of reading for pleasure differ between junior (grade 5) and intermediate (grade 8 & 9) students?

The enjoyment of reading, both as a school-related activity and one that is practised independently, differed considerably among junior and intermediate students. Twenty-four per cent of the Grade 5 students indicated that they enjoyed reading "a great deal" as part of their school work (see Table 1). This figure of almost 1 in 4 junior students was in sharp contrast to the intermediate respondents. Nine per cent of the Grade 8 and seven per cent of the Grade 9 students indicated that they enjoyed reading related to their school work "a great deal". Although an appreciable difference is evident, it was less evident in response to the question "Do you enjoy reading on your own for pleasure?" Twenty-three per cent of the Grade 5's, twenty-two per cent of the Grade 8's and sixteen per cent of the Grade 9's answered "a great deal". (Table 2)

TABLE 1

HOW MUCH DO YOU ENJOY READING AS PART OF YOUR SCHOOL WORK?

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 9
Not at all	3.2%	3.9%	13.3%
Not much	4.8	10.8	20.0
It's OK	28.6	50.0	43.3
Quite a bit	39.7	26.5	16.7
A great deal	23.8	8.8	6.7

TABLE 2

HOW MUCH DO YOU ENJOY READING ON YOUR OWN FOR PLEASURE?

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 9
Not at all	-	4.8%	6.6%
Not much	10.9	7.7	16.4
It's OK	34.4	27.9	26.2
Quite a bit	31.3	37.5	34.4
A great deal	23.4	22.1	16.4

The acknowledged time spent on recreational reading differed among junior and intermediate students. Table 3 describes the responses, by grade, of students to the question concerning frequency of recreational reading.

TABLE 3

HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ ON YOUR OWN FOR PLEASURE?

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 9
Never	-	3.8%	8.2%
Not very often	9.4	11.5	16.4
Occasionally	42.2	31.7	37.7
Frequently	31.3	38.5	26.2
All the time	17.2	14.4	11.5

During uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading time (e.g. USSR, SQUIRT) in class, five per cent of the students in Grade 5 said that they did not read. Two per cent of the Grade 8 students and twenty-nine per cent of the Grade 9 students said that they did not read during this time.

When asked if they were currently reading a book, eighty per cent of the Grade 5 students, eighty-nine per cent of the Grade 8 and fifty-six per cent of the Grade 9 students reported that they were. Asked why they were reading the book, almost three-quarters (71%) of the Grade 5 students indicated that it was for pleasure, while only half (51%) of the intermediates said that they were reading the book for their own enjoyment.

Students were asked about their practice of reading magazines and newspapers. The frequency of recreational magazine reading increases slightly with age, showing a mean of 3.25, 3.42 and 3.57 for the grade 5, 8 and 9 students, respectively. Many of the magazines read were specifically related to recreational interests, especially sports, vehicles and the entertainment industry.

There was little discernible difference in newspaper readership across the three grades surveyed. The entertainment, sports and comic sections were most frequently cited as being read by the sample population.

A smaller percentage of intermediate students indicated that they were reading a lot more now than they were a year ago. Table 4 summarizes student responses to the question dealing with current reading practice.

TABLE 4

DO YOU READ FOR PLEASURE LESS OR MORE NOW THAN YOU DID ONE YEAR AGO?

	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 9
A lot less	3.1%	1.9%	1.7%
Less	9.4	9.7	11.7
About the same	21.9	44.2	56.7
More	34.4	31.7	23.3
A lot more	31.4	12.5	6.6

The final question of the survey asked students to what extent they thought reading would help them to be successful in their life. Sixty-two per cent of the grade 5 students said that reading would be "a lot of help" to them. This figure dropped marginally to fifty-nine per cent at the Grade 8 level, but fell twenty-three percentage points to thirty-six per cent at the Grade 9 level.

2. What conditions influence the adolescent's interest in reading for pleasure?

A whole range of conditions and circumstances affects the individual's interest in pursuing reading as a leisure activity. Students indicated that segments of time free from responsibility, the availability of interesting reading material and the motivation of read are all major considerations.

Speculating that life is a whirlwind of activity for young people, the questionnaire asked students to list the activities or pastimes that occupied their out-of-school hours. The majority of students at all grade levels filled the six spaces allocated for this response and many added two or three more activities. Their pastimes included, in small part; acting, dancing, shopping, movies, reading, music, sports, computer games, "hanging out", talking on the telephone and watching television.

At the intermediate level; television, team sports, reading, socializing, computerized video games, music and talking on the phone were the favoured activities in the order of their frequency of response. The amount of time reportedly spent on these pastimes was considerable. Although a sense of time is idiosyncratic and easily misjudged, some Grade 8 and 9 students said that they spent 16 to 30 hours a week playing video games; up to 35 hours talking on the phone; 18, 24, 30, or 48 hours getting together with friends; and 19 to 27 hours watching television.

In response to the survey question "How much time do you spend on your favourite activities?" the mean response for the Grade 5, 8 and 9 students was 8.13, 10.87 and 14.11 hours, respectively. These data demonstrate an increase with age in the number of hours that students are involved in chosen activities.

When asked how much influence these prolific activities had on the amount of time spent reading for enjoyment, approximately 47% of the intermediate students said that their involvement had "no influence" or "not much influence" on reading time. Yet paradoxically, in cases where students said that they read for pleasure less now than they did a year ago, many cited the lack of time as the major reason.

Repeatedly students indicated, both on the questionnaire and during the personal interview, that time to read was not available to them. More homework and school assignments limited the time that they could devote to recreational reading. During the interviews, eleven students (74%) reiterated that time to sit quietly and read was scarce. Their lives were so filled with school responsibilities and social obligations that, although they liked reading, other activities precluded it. Craig, for example, said that the only time he found to read was in the car on his way to a distant hockey tournament. He reported that on the journey there and back he could finish a novel of reasonable length; however, he remembered little of what he had read in this manner.

Many said that more time (currently about 15 minutes) should be allocated to reading during the school day. Although it was part of their daily schedule, often the silent reading time was superceded by other work. Several students were annoyed by this. Julie said, "How come we never get to finish our reading in math time instead of the other way 'round". The large percentage (98%) of Grade 8's who said that they read during the offered time underscores its worth. Grade 9 students said that USSR (personal reading time) was not consistently part of their in-class time.

Many students equate reading with school work and are anxious to leave the two behind when the dismissal bell rings. Tina said that she reads less now than she did because "I have a lot of homework and I rather spend my time not working (reading) and watch t.v.". In field-testing the questionnaire in May, one boy suggested that the two questions "How much do you enjoy reading as part of your school work?" and "How much do you enjoy reading on your own for pleasure?" were one and the same and should be reworked. He was convinced that you only read what is assigned as school work and therefore the two questions were a needless duplication. He judged himself to be a good reader, yet he only read what he had to read.

Of the 15 students interviewed, 12 (80%) considered themselves to be good to excellent readers, able to read fluently and with a high degree of comprehension. These students had the skills but lacked the time and motivation to read for enjoyment.

Intermediate students want access to reading materials that are diverse in content, difficulty and presentation. Many students indicated that they were not permitted to make an independent choice of what they read. Sharon said that she wanted to read whatever she liked without having to read a specific theme or genre. As an "amazing reader" she resented having literacy choices made for her. Her favourite books (by Jackie Collins, Danielle Steel) were those given to her by her mother and could not be deemed juvenile literature.

The survey asked students to check the kinds of books that they enjoy reading. Throughout the entire sample (Grades 5, 8, and 9) there was a consistent liking for adventure, mystery and humour stories. In Grade 9, however, the students had a less marked preference for certain genres and showed a wider interest in science fiction, horror and romance. Historical fiction was the least favourite for all respondents. It's interesting to note that many intermediate level novel studies are historical fiction. Perhaps this serves to reinforce the reading -- school work equation.

Few books that intermediate students cited as their favourites were those read as part of the school curriculum. Included in the intermediate list of favourite books were:

Grade 8

Hammer of the Gods
The Naked Face
My Sweet Audrina
Exorcist III
Hardy Boys
Tomorrow I'll Be Perfect
Trump: The Art of the Deal
Babysitters' Club

Grade 9

Clan of the Cave Bear
First Blood
Salem's Lot
Daddy
Narnia Series
Pet Semetary
Go Jump in the Pool
Sweet Dreams

Favourite authors at the intermediate level included Stephen King, Judy Blume, V.C. Andrews, Gordon Korman, Christopher Pike and Danielle Steel.

When asked "How often do you go to the School Library for independent or recreational reading books?", 48% of Grade 5 students reported that they went "frequently" or "all the time", 8% of the Grade 8's and 11% of the Grade 9 responses lay within these two categories.

To corroborate school library use, the borrowing practices of Grade 5 and Grade 8 students at Linwood School were tracked. Over a six-week period, Grade 5 students borrowed an average of four books per student. This was in contrast to the practices of the Grade 8's. Thirty-seven per cent of the Grade 8 students had the same book throughout the six-week tracking period and another thirty-three per cent of these students did not have a library book at all during that period.

Nor are public libraries a source of recreational reading materials for adolescents. When asked about their visits to the public library, fourteen per cent of the Grade 8 students surveyed said that they "never" went to the public library for recreational reading books and another thirty-six per cent said that they went "not very often". It was evident from the students' statements that they perceive the public library, and the school library for that matter, as places to do research.

Grade 8 students interviewed reported that the majority of their reading materials came from their own personal libraries. They showed a decided preference for books that they had purchased themselves or that had been passed along to them by family or friends.

The final condition found to influence the adolescent's interest in reading for pleasure is the presence of reading role models. Sharon, who said she was "more busier" and had no time to read, admitted to finding the time when her mother recommended a book to her. Keith's mother, he said, read all the time and often started reading a book aloud to him which he subsequently finished. John said that his grandmother was constantly buying books for him and leaving them around to pique his interest. Ron's mother often made him turn off the television and sent him off to read a book. Emily was taken to the public library once or twice a month by her mother, who was a frequent library patron.

Fathers, too, are meaningful influences. Carol remarked that her father preferred that she read rather than watch television. He often said this while both of them were watching television; yet neither one turned off the set. Craig's father, on the other hand, was an avid reader who talked regularly about his reading. His recommendations were the books that Craig read while journeying to his hockey games. Craig's was the only father mentioned by the Grade 8 students interviewed as being a positive influence on reading for enjoyment. In all other cases the predominant reading role model was the mother.

3. Are there gender differences in reading habits and preferences at the intermediate level?

The sample of 104 Grade 8 students was comprised of 49% boys and 51% girls. There were noticeable differences between the male and female responses associated with reading practice. Sixty-eight per cent of the girls in Grade 8 responded that they enjoyed reading on their own for pleasure "quite a bit" or "a great deal" in comparison to the boys' forty-six per cent response in the same categories.

Table 5 summarizes the Grade 8 male and female responses to the question concerning frequency of reading for pleasure.

TABLE 5

HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ ON YOUR OWN FOR PLEASURE?

Grade 8	Boy	Girl
Never	13.3%	-
Not very often	13.7	8.4%
Occasionally	31.7	36.7
Frequently	35.0	34.3
All the time	6.3	20.6

Interestingly, a larger proportion of girls indicated that they were reading less now than they were a year ago. Nine girls (9%), compared to 3 (3%) boys of the grade 8's surveyed, replied that they were reading "less" or "a lot less" than they were in the past year.

Boys were involved in more out-of-school activities than were girls and gave more of their time to activities such as organized sports, watching television and playing Nintendo-type computer games. One third (33%) of the boys reported that their involvement influenced their independent reading time "quite a bit" or "a lot". Only 4 per cent of the girls responded in a similar manner.

Grade 8 boys attached less importance to the role that reading would play in their future. Twenty-five boys (49%) compared to 37 (70%) girls thought that reading would contribute "a lot of help" to their success in life.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

4. How can schools and families encourage intermediate students to develop and/or retain an interest in reading for pleasure?

The results of this research demonstrate that aliteracy is a concern at the intermediate level. Grade 8 students display some reluctance to read for enjoyment during their leisure hours and the reluctance becomes more pronounced among Grade 9 students. Three factors should be considered if intermediate students are to pursue reading for its enjoyment value: the provision of generous amounts of time, independent selection from a wide variety of materials and appropriate role models to emulate as readers.

The majority of the students interviewed said that they enjoyed reading but that little time was permitted for independent reading. Many implied that they had lost control of their time and spoke of earlier years when "there wasn't so much happening".

Time to read independently is essential if student interest in reading for pleasure is to be sustained. To ensure that time is allocated for independent reading, more time -- without interruption -- must be consistently provided as part of the school day. During this time, students will have the opportunity to see their teachers engaged in the habit of reading for personal pleasure. These experiences will contribute to the students' perception that reading is enjoyable and perhaps motivate them to read in other situations and locations.

Intermediate students need access to reading materials that are diverse in content, difficulty and presentation. Few books that intermediate students cited as their favourites were those read as part of the school curriculum. In addition to curriculum-related reading, students must be provided with opportunities to make their own selection of reading material, in a variety of formats -- books of all kinds, magazines and newspapers.

Considering the type of books which appeal to many intermediate students it's apparent why so few intermediates, Grade 8 students in particular, frequent the school library for recreational reading books. The maturity level of the novels read is beyond that of most collections either in the school library or in the classroom. Teachers and teacher-librarians must get in touch with the reading interests and tastes of intermediate students. Through booktalking and other promotional means, intermediates can be introduced to young adult authors who deal honestly with the concerns of young adults, in stories that will entice them to read. Paperbacks should be in vast profusion and in multiple copies so that adolescents can talk with their peers about a commonly-read book. Magazines which cater to the interests of adolescents should also be made readily available.

Public libraries also need to actively promote their leisure reading collections among the young adult public. Campaigns that offer recreational programs and materials of interest to adolescents will do much to ensure their future patronage.

The Grade 8 students interviewed reported that the majority of their reading material came from their own personal libraries. Opportunities such as bookfairs and in-school book stores would allow adolescents to acquire their own books, for which they have a decided preference.

The final factor that must be considered to limit the effects of intermediate aliteracy is the presence of reading role models. A literate home environment which sustains an interest in reading is of immense importance to young adults, just as it has the same powerful impact on the reading attitudes of younger children.

Adolescents who see that the significant adults, both male and female, in their lives are readers, will learn firsthand of the pleasures that books offer.

In addition to the presence of literate family models, young people need to see that the heroes and personalities they admire are lovers of reading. The American Library Association's poster campaign a few years ago involved stars, such as Sting and Michael J. Fox, proclaiming their interest in books. MuchMusic's production of "Rock n' Roll and Reading" (City TV, 1990) is another example of well-known rock stars endorsing reading as a inspiration for their music. Linwood students who saw the tape were anxious to locate the authors and books mentioned by the artists. Public awareness promotions such as these should constantly and pervasively carry the "reading for enjoyment" message.

This research has demonstrated that aliteracy is an issue that must be addressed at the intermediate level. Students who have turned their backs on reading for enjoyment are prevalent in this sample of Grade 8 students and become increasingly so in this specific Grade 9 population. Students must be encouraged to retain their interest in reading during the years prior to adolescence and throughout their young adult years.

The research will continue beyond the timeframe dedicated to this research grant. Interventions that deal with the reading habits and attitudes of the whole class as well as more individualized stategies will be tried. A wealth of information about the existence of aliteracy at the intermediate level has been uncovered and diverse means to curb its prevalence can now be implemented. The influences of time, independent selection and a positive reading environment are vital to the intermediate student who makes the choice to be literate.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How much do you enjoy reading as part of your school work?

   ________ Not at all
   ________ Not much
   ________ It's OK
   ________ Quite a bit
   ________ A great deal

2. How much do you enjoy reading on your own for pleasure?

   ________ Not at all
   ________ Not much
   ________ It's OK
   ________ Quite a bit
   ________ A great deal

3. How often do you read on your own for pleasure?

   ________ Never
   ________ Not very often
   ________ Occasionally
   ________ Frequently
   ________ All the time

4. Do you read during quiet reading times at school?

   ________ Yes
   ________ No -- If No what do you do during this time?

   ____

5. Check the kinds of books that you enjoy reading: (Check as many as you like)

   _____ Adventure
   _____ Historical Fiction
   _____ Humour
   _____ Mystery

_____ Romance
_____ Science Fiction
_____ Information books about __________________
_____ Other (please specify) __________________

6. What are the titles of 2 or 3 of your favourite books or series of books?

____
____
____
____

7. Are you reading a book right now?

_______ No
_______ Yes -- If YES, what is the title:
____

8. How often do you read magazines?

_______ Never
_______ Not very often
_______ Occasionally
_______ Frequently
_______ All the time

9. Which magazines do you read?

____

10. How often do you read a newspaper?

_______ Never
_______ Not very often
_______ Occasionally
_______ Frequently
_______ All the time

11. Which newspapers do you read?

____

12. What sections of the newspaper do you enjoy reading the most?

____

13. Do you read for pleasure more or less now than you did one year ago?

_______ A lot less
_______ Less
_______ About the same
_______ More
_______ A lot more

14. If you read for pleasure LESS than you did last year, what reasons can you give for this decrease?

____
____
____

15. If you read for pleasure MORE than you did last year, what reasons can you give for this increase?

____
____
____

16. What are your favourite activities or pastimes when you are not in school?

a. ____________________ b. ____________________

c. ____________________ d. ____________________

e. ____________________ f. ____________________

17. How much time do you spend on your favourite activities?

Activity a. ________________ Hours per week ________

Activity b. ________________ Hours per week ________

18. What other activities are you involved in before school or after school or on the weekends? (e.g. Scouts, Guides, parochial or heritage school)

19. How much influence do these activities have on the amount of time you spend on independent reading for enjoyment?

________ No influence
________ Not much influence
________ Some influence
________ Quite a bit of influence
________ A lot of influence

20. How often do you go to the SCHOOL library for independent or recreational reading books?

________ Never
________ Not very often
________ Occasionally
________ Frequently
________ All the time

21. How often do you go to the PUBLIC library for recreational reading books?

________ Never
________ Not very often
________ Occasionally
________ Frequently
________ All the time

22. How much do you think that reading will help you to be successful in your life?

________ No help at all
________ Not much help
________ Some help
________ Quite a bit of help
________ A lot of help

APPENDIX B
GRADE 8 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does recreational reading/reading for pleasure mean to you?

   - attitudes (enjoyment, aversion)
   - when
   - frequency
   - where
   - favourite "reads"
   - how selected: school library use
     public library use

2. How good a reader do you think you are?

3. What activities are you involved in outside of school hours?

4. What is your parents' attitude towards reading?

   - mother
   - indicators of this:
   - father
   - indicators of this:

5. What do your parents read? When?

   - mother
   - father

6. Independent reading time at school?

   - when
   - how used: individually, class

7. What would make you enjoy reading more?

COMPUTER-MEDIATED WRITING: THE WRITER IN ELECTRONIC RESIDENCE

Trevor Owen

In May 1990, the Writer In Electronic Residence program was awarded a grant for Teacher Research on Literacy under the auspices of the Canadian Teachers' Federation. I am pleased that our program was recognized under the terms of this program, and to offer our report.

The projects that form the basis of this report involve the creative use of technology by students for writing and communicating. The manner in which these activities are undertaken supports the view of literacy expressed in the "Criteria for Proposals" that

> *"in order to participate fully in today's society it is necessary not only to have basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, but also to be able to use those skills to carry out more demanding intellectual tasks".*

As noted in our original application, this report considers the thesis that "literacy increases where meaningful opportunities for literacy exist". This report will illustrate how our application of telecommunications technology both summons and sustains meaningful opportunities for literacy.

BACKGROUND

For several years, I have been active in developing projects that brought word-processing and telecommunications to the English classroom. In each case, the purpose has been to contribute to human communication by placing students in control of the media before them, and then to utilize these media to broaden the shape and scope of the classroom experience. Taken together, our projects promote language development and proficiency, overcoming distance and time to bring the world to the classroom.

In this program, which originated at an inner-city secondary school in Toronto, technology is used for writing in English and Language Arts classrooms, and for extending student experience by communicating with writers, teachers and one another, throughout Canada, North America and the world. Over the past three years, these projects have involved students from Baffin Island to Williams Lake, Owen Sound to Vancouver, and elsewhere. Additional links have been made with schools at all levels in the United States, Europe and Britain.

INSTRUMENTS OF LITERACY: READING & WRITING TO LEARN

These programs are about writing and communication, and they embrace instruments of technology as instruments of literacy. Student writing, and the discussion of student writing -- undertaken both textually and orally, electronically and in the classroom -- blends computer wordprocessing, telecommunications and computer-mediated communication (CMC) to provide direct and personal contact with writers and other students in Canada over an extended interval, normally a term or semester. We have called this process "*Computer-Mediated Writing*".

Initially, we focused on using this application of technology to promote the process of reading and writing to learn in the classroom for two reasons:

(a) *the nature of on-line interaction is textual and therefore, appropriate to writing and commentary; and*

(b) *the on-line forum provides a certain equity of use, placing students in control of the media before them to broaden the shape and scope of the classroom experience.*

These ideas have been reported widely since the program began in 1988. However, as a result of our work this year, we are now prepared to include these additional notions:

(c) *the interaction that is fostered online promotes considered response both online and in the classroom, engaging the participants in an essentially reflective activity that fosters the acquisition and use of language for reading and writing; and,*

(d) *original student writing is validated as legitimate reading material.*

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

We know now from our work that these links offer meaningful opportunities for language development and proficiency.

Students control their own experiences in an atmosphere where tolerance is promoted as a natural result of seeing the world as another might. But we know, too, that a need exists to interpret experience within a meaningful context. A clear example emerged in our first project when the Ontario students began receiving poems from students attending a secondary school in British Columbia. The themes present in their poems were quite similar in many cases, but the images that supported them clearly revealed that a sense of place and region was inherent in the work -- their own and others. Images of urban traffic congestion in one setting gave way to mountains and oceans in another, and the students began to discuss -- as a group, within the context of their own classroom -- how to respond to the new experience.

LOCAL SHAPE

To this extent, then, it is clear that this language-based use of technology offers an oral possibility in addition to a written one, especially when the telecommunicated experience is incorporated into an existing constituency, like a classroom. We have identified this need to interpret experience within established, participating constituencies as "local shape".

Over the last year, we have seen this idea of "local shape" develop in classrooms as students encountered ideas that were partly unfamiliar, but partly familiar too. In effect, the students called upon themselves and one another to consider, reflect upon, and express how "who we are" reveals "how we are *where* we are", and their abilities to summon language appropriate to their desire to respond and interact was based upon a sincere wish to be understood as well as to understand.

Their writing is remarkable.

In the course of their writing, Inuit students in Baffin Island, for example, revealed notions about survival in ways that were quite different from those expressed by students who identified themselves as Canadian-born Chinese from urban Toronto or rural Ontario. Vietnamese students who wrote about war, about the boats, and about escape and betrayal, also searched for ways to express fond memories, the value of trust, and the details of life as they lived it in Hanoi.

Still others considered issues of equity and gender, race, and freedom of expression.

However different the students were from one another, all were exposed to a shared sensitivity. All searched deeply. And all controlled their own participation in an atmosphere of co-operation and trust.

In this report we view the telecommunicated experience as a means by which language is experienced, and we believe that many meaningful opportunities to summon language flow naturally from these links -- both online and as a result of having been online.

OUR PURPOSE AND RESEARCH DESIGN

As we noted in the original application, our work to date has been carefully documented. We have emphasized observational study of how the classroom experience is shaped by the online experience, and especially on how student expression and independence is increased through these opportunities for language development and proficiency. We have also considered how these opportunities operate under the students' control, within a collaborative context.

Our students may now reach out -- electronically -- into the world from their desks and bring what they find there back into the classroom.

They can do this to meet existing curricular goals too. But more often than not, we are seeing that new, more active components to learning with the curriculum we have are beginning to emerge.

We have, and will continue to have, questions about the impact and possibility of this work, but we have considered the issues we set out to consider in our application about what the impact of increased student control over access to these and other opportunities might mean to learning in the classroom, and what role there might be for the online experience -- as an instrument of literacy -- in the classroom, to meet existing curricular goals, across subject disciplines.

We believe the notion expressed in our application -- that literacy increases where meaningful opportunities for literacy exist -- is as true online as it is in the classroom.

LET'S WRITE TOGETHER

Martha Gabriel

This project was carried out to assess the changes in attitudes toward writing on the part of both students and parents as the children engaged in an intense writing experience over a six week period during the school year.

The study addressed these questions:

1) Do young writers undergo a change in attitude toward writing as they work to publish a book?

2) Are there positive attitudes that can be observed when parents are helped to understand the writing process, and are invited to participate actively in this process?

The individuals involved in this study were the twenty-nine members of my grade six class in a rural elementary school in Prince Edward Island, as well as their parents. Two of the students were receiving resource help during the current school year, and another student in my class had received resource lessons over the past several years, although not during this school year.

The writing project took place within the context of a writing workshop in my classroom. I provided space and time on a daily basis for students to choose what they would write about, and I provided the opportunity for these young writers to receive feedback about their writing, by conferencing with other writers and by publishing their pieces of writing.

THE PROJECT PROCESS

Early in September, my sixth grade students were introduced to the procedures of our writing workshop. These included learning about the physical set-up of a writing workshop, an introduction to some craft-of-writing ideas, and an introduction to the computer-as-word-processor. My students also received the news that they were all going to be publishing a book in the next six weeks. Most of these young writers had not had the opportunity to "go public" with their writing before, so they were excited when they understood what they would be doing.

IN SEPTEMBER...

1. I introduced my students to the writing workshop. They were each given a writing folder in which all drafts of their writing were to be kept. A number

of discussions about the importance of the process of writing, rather than a focus on the product of writing, were held. Many of these children enjoyed writing, and told me they were looking forward to doing "lots of writing" in school this year.

2. Each student completed several writing surveys. (Appendix A) These were given with a view toward determining current attitudes toward writing.

3. I met with each parent individually, and explained the writing process that his or her child would be engaged in over the next six weeks. Each parent was also asked to fill in a writing questionnaire that attempted to determine current attitudes toward writing, and what importance was attached to it. (Appendix B)

IN OCTOBER...

1. Students worked in writing workshop on their pieces of writing daily. They learned to brainstorm, choose topics, let their ideas spill out on the paper in first drafts. They saved all their work, learning that scraps of ideas and small jottings might eventually be useful in their writing. They wrote on looseleaf paper, skipping lines and using only one side of the paper for their writing.

2. Writers learned to conference, to have a conversation focused on writing, with each other. Students learned that there were four classroom spaces and one library space where these conversations could take place.

3. Students were taught how to type on a computer keyboard. The first step involved working with a paper copy of a keyboard, to allow lots of time for students to find particular letters and figures. Six team leaders (who had had previous training from myself) then worked with groups of five other students at the computer keyboard. Students learned to type their names, use capitals, periods, quotation marks, and other punctuation marks. They also learned how to use the delete key and space bar. We used Bank Street Writer on an Apple IIgs, and MacWrite on a Macintosh.

4. A night meeting was held for interested parents, to discuss the book writing project in more detail, to enlist parent support in typing the first drafts of student writing on the computers, and to teach parents how to use a word processor if they did not already know how to use it.

5. Parents came to work in the classroom on typing first drafts. Five parents were able to come during the school day, and another three parents volunteered their time at night.

6. After students received their first drafts back from the parent volunteers, they began to work on revising the paper copy. The stories were triple-spaced, to allow much more room for changes. Writers were taught strategies for revising, such as cut-and-paste, the use of arrows, how to insert words using carets, how to insert paragraphs by writing them on another piece of paper, and using asterisks to mark the insertion.

7. Writers learned how to use the program disk to get the word-processing program up and running. They also learned how to use the data disk to get the copy of their story. They worked on putting the revisions and changes they had made on their first draft into the computer. The learned to save their work, and to print out a copy of their new draft.

8. Writers continued to work on their pieces of writing, taking the latest print-out from the word processor, and revising it. As they completed a set of revisions, each student would sign up for computer time to type their changes into their stories.

9. Writers made an entry in their Writing Logs every day, detailing what writing they had done that day, as well as detailing specific writing strategies they had learned.

10. I kept some field notes in a writing log as well.

IN NOVEMBER...

1. As the writers began to find that the content of their writing was set, that there were no further changes they wanted to make in the content, they were taught how to edit their work. Editing involved checking for meaning, checking for order, and checking for language, including concerns such as correct spelling, paragraphing, learning how to set up dialogue. (Murray, 1984)

2. The final line-by-line editing was done by myself, and the final copy of each story was printed out.

3. Each writer chose the cover stock for their book, and illustrated the cover. Each student also wrote a dedication page and an "About the Author" page.

4. Writers worked on illustrations for their books.

5. Books were bound using a commercial spiral binding machine, and students practised reading their books to an audience.

6. Parents and friends were invited to an Author's Night. This Author's Night was organized so that all the student authors went to a workshop with a published author of books for young people. At the same time, their parents were invited to a "Happening", which was an hour-long workshop on the writing process, given by the language arts consultant in our school unit. During this workshop, the parents themselves were helped to write. After the workshops, refreshments were served, and then the student writers broke into smaller groups to read their books aloud, and launch them in front of an audience. Comment booklets were also made available for the audience to jot down their responses to their children's new books.

7. Student writers were asked to complete several writing questionnaires, and to comment on their feelings about being involved in the book writing process.

8. Parents submitted some pieces of writing which had their origins in the "Happening" workshop on Author's Night.

9. The books were copied and bound. One copy was donated to our school library, and carded with a proper library card, while the other copy went home with each author.

A WINDOW ON THE PROJECT

As the vice-principal of my school came walking by my class one day, a look of consternation crossed his face. He walked in to see if he could offer some help, but he was unable to find me, since I was in a huddle with a group of students in the planning centre, sharing our stories with each other as readers. There were pairs of children working together in corners in the classroom, heads bent close, as they asked for and received feedback about their writing from their conference partner. Other writers were engaged in the most solitary of occupations: putting their thoughts down on paper. Other students sat at their desks staring off into space... Every once in a while, the groups of children reading their writing out loud would have to be reminded to keep the noise level down -- many of the children in my class had told me how they needed peace and quiet to produce any writing. And a modicum of peace will be important in any class, but I suppose especially one which finds itself situated in an open area school. Our noise level impacts on all other classes on our floor. Every day in writer's workshop, there is a creative tension between quiet work and the excitement of sharing, between solitary writing and the buzz of children interacting and learning together. My vice-principal soon gave up trying to spot the teacher, and instead joined several of the groups in turn, to see what they were so busily engaged in doing.

On this particular day, Catherine* had told me during the status-of-the-class conference (Atwell, 1987) that she was going to work on another piece of poetry for the book she planned to publish. I saw her staring into space, holding her chin in her hands. Then she looked back down at her paper, and scribbled furiously for awhile. After she read over what she had just written, she jumped up out of her chair and walked over to Maria's desk to ask her to listen to the newest addition to Catherine's writing. The two girls wandered over to the back corner of the room when it became free, and sat cross-legged on the carpet close to each other. I could see Maria listening very intently as Catherine shared her latest piece of poetry. When Catherine finished, the girls chatted about the writing together for a few moments before they each headed back to their own desks. Catherine said, "I conferenced with Maria about my poem. It was great! My mind just went into gear today. I guess the long weekend helped my brain have a rest, and now I'm ready to write".

Catherine's writing experience today is similar to the way the students in my class have been working on their writing for about an hour a day, five days a week. We are all working to produce a piece of writing that we can publish in about six weeks' time. Our writing time begins with a cross-class check up, to see who is planning to work on what during the writing class. Student's ideas often receive a wide distribution, as one person's ideas can jog someone else's thinking. Everyone settles down to write for at least ten minutes of sustained, silent writing. After that initial silent writing period, writers can ask for conferences with other writers or with the teacher, or sometimes a group of writers gets together in the planning centre for an "Author's Circle". (Harste et al., 1988)

Conferring with other writers is the learning strategy that can make a classroom a fairly noisy place, but the benefits of developing that camaraderie, the sharing attitude, the listening to a piece of writing as a writer, far outweigh the distractions of the noise. As the writing progresses, and the content of a piece of writing is fairly set, then the students also chat with each other about revisions for the writing: spellings, punctuating, whether the order of events is good, if the lead will grab another reader.

During this particular writing project, we were fortunate to have one other input in our writing class. I invited parents into our classroom to type the first drafts of the student's writings into the computer. Each day for almost a week, there were several mothers who came into class and typed during writing time, and on through the day. Catherine said, "I just can't wait till my draft is finished being typed, because I'll love to revise it". All my students felt the same! They looked forward to having the mothers in our class, and they were particularly anxious to get their own stories typed in using the word processing program. We used both Bank Street Writer on the Apple llgs and MacWrite on a Macintosh. After each writer received the first draft back, he or she went right to work on it again. After making revisions on the printed copy, they then signed up for time at the computer to input their revisions. We could easily have used more computers in the classroom, because there often was quite a list of names of writers waiting their turn with the word processor!

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* Note: Children's names have been changed to protect their identity.

Eventually, however, every writer in the class had a turn or several turns at the computers. As this work was going on at the computers, the daily writing workshop continued. Each writer went through a process of writing, sharing with others, refining the meaning of the piece of writing, making it mean what the writer intended. Listen again to Catherine as she shares her thoughts about the process she is going through:

> *Today in writing class I had the best time revising. It was fun reading and putting in corrections. I think I might write one more poem and one more story for my book. I really can't get over how much fun I had today revising. Tomorrow when I finish my other poem and story I'll revise a little more and then send it in to be typed again and I'll get another draft. It will be fun to finish my book but it'll be kinda sad when I finish because I won't get to work on it anymore.*

The students in my class knew they had a deadline for finishing their books, since the entire book-writing project was to be wrapped up in time for Author's Night. It was on that night that the writers would go public with their pieces of writing. We planned a celebration of authorship, and invited all our parents as well as school officials. Student writers were invited to a one-hour workshop with a published writer of fiction for children. At the same time, their parents were invited to a "Happening", which was a one hour workshop on the writing process given by the language arts consultant in our school unit. After the two workshops were completed, refreshments were served, and then the student writers launched their books in front of this very empathetic audience.

Parents who came to the writing "Happening" had the opportunity to do some writing of their own, and actually experience a writing process similar to the one their children had just gone through. Afterwards, they shared some of their thoughts with us: "On entering the writing room and finding we had to write a story, I thought, now I know what my daughter goes through..." "I think the experience tonight helped me to better understand what is expected of the children..." "Not comfortable at first, but after beginning to write, my fear was becoming less and less..." "Although I will never be an author, this was a fun experience. The hour went by in what seemed like ten minutes. I am glad my child has had an opportunity to experience this while at a young age..."

RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

The Writing Process...

The young writers in my class developed an expectation over the six weeks of our book-writing project that they would have time during each school day to write. They learned that when they actually sat down to write, they were able to express themselves on paper, and let their stories evolve. I found that before going through this process, many children thought that they had to have the story completely worked out in their heads before they could begin to write it. Now they know that oftentimes they are able to discover their meaning through their writing, and not the other way around.

Students spent almost an hour each day engaged in writing and writing activities. They discovered that writing can involve other activities besides putting pencil to paper. They learned that writers spend quite a bit of time thinking; that they notice many of the things that are going on around them as possible material for their writing. Writers allow their imaginations to soar! My students began to find that writing ideas began coming to them at unexpected times and places. One young writer found that she dreamt of different scenes that she was able to remember and use in her stories the next day. Another writer told me that she would wake up at night with a story in her head, and she kept a kleenex box (I have no idea why she didn't use a pad of paper!) and a pencil handy so she could write down the main idea before she forgot it. Because these students were immersed in a workshop where they were given time everyday to write, they began to act and think like writers.

Because they were thinking like writers, my students also began to read the printed word much more critically. During our reading workshop times, students began to look at the leads written by published authors, to see if they could get ideas from these craftspeople. They checked how dialogue was presented, and could be used to move the action along. They learned the function of prologues and epilogues, and several writers began to think about using those devices themselves. My students had, in Frank Smith's words, "joined the club" of writers.

These young writers looked to other writers to help them, whether the other writer was a published commercial author, or one of their own classmates. An awakening appreciation of the strengths that each one of us working in that classroom could share was one of the most important results of this entire project. Students began to see each other as "experts" in different areas. When it came time to edit drafts, children asked someone who was a competent speller for help. If a writer needed some information about horses, she might go to the student whose family raced horses at the track. If a writer needed someone to give him feedback on his story, he might ask one of the students who was a good listener for help, not necessarily his best friend.

In this way, the children in class began to collaborate with each other as writers. They began to view each other as fellow learners and writers. "Dana is a great writer and she can really write good stories. In the story she wrote she had an introduction, that is one thing I liked about it. I think that if you're conferencing you should pick someone who will listen, not someone who will fool around". Catherine did not include an introduction in her published story, but after her conference with Dana, she is thinking about using an introduction in her next story.

Students learned that there are many facets of writing: working out plot ideas in their heads "counts" as writing, as does talking to others about their writing. Writing is not only forming words on paper. In these days of competition with television, I have found that short, pointed lessons on some aspect of the writing process work much better than long, thorough lessons which all too often are forgotten. I try to make as many connections between what I am teaching my young writers about the process of writing, and what is pertinent to them as writers in the here and now, as I can. When I found many children having their characters speak in their stories, I taught the entire group how to set up dialogue in a story. I only spent a few minutes on it, and I've come back and taught a similar lesson other times. I find that the short lesson meets different writers' needs at different times, so that I might have reached five children the first time I taught it, another three the second time, and maybe four the third time.

Donald Murray (1984) says that writing is a recursive process. I find that supporting writers in their search for meaning, helping them learn to express exactly what it is they want to say, is a recursive process also. I have to keep circling back into the material, helping students move from concerns with developing a point of view and a focus for their piece of writing, to an increasing command of the mechanics of writing, to helping them take their piece of writing from brainstorming to drafting to revising to drafting to editing to publishing. Each point on this spiral of the writing process places certain demands on the writer, and on the teacher who would support the writer throughout the process.

When they responded to survey questions, most of the students in my class said they perceived themselves as writers before the book-writing project even started. The two children who said they were **not** writers in September, knew they **were** writers by November. When asked how they felt about what they wrote, in September most children said they felt okay or good. By November, children said they felt good, they liked what they wrote, it made them feel special, it made them feel proud. When they were asked what writers needed to do in order to write well, even before they started writing workshop, children were able to mention a number of strategies that they thought allowed a writer to write well, such as:

> *Put yourself in the character's place...take time...think of an interesting story ... a writer needs an imagination and a quiet place ... be creative ... dream up things ... know how to read and write ... he or she needs a lot of practice...*

In November, in response to the same question, more students are able to mention specific writing strategies, such as:

> *Have an interest in writing ... use your imagination ... enjoy it ... write about what you like ... pick a topic and then write about it ... brainstorm ... a writer needs to study other books and [get] different ideas for a book ... have to be able to make the book interesting ... concentrate on what they're going to write and think about it ... a quiet place and good ideas ... he or she needs to have ideas, lots of ideas of what he or she wants to write ... practice your [story] writing so you can write better ...*

I taught many lessons on different revising and editing strategies. Some children have the idea that when writers write, the ideas magically appear in perfect form on the paper at the first go. It was a revelation to them that writers go through a process of jotting ideas down in their early drafts, and then spend a tremendous amount of time shaping and refining these ideas until each word means exactly what the author intended. Many children thought that writing a second draft meant writing a neater copy. It was a breakthrough for many when they realized that they could improve their stories by going back and changing what they had earlier written. So my students had to be taught specific strategies to physically manage the changes they were learning to make: how to skip lines on their papers so there would be room for new words and sentences when they went back to work on them. These young writers had to be taught how to insert words using a caret, how to add entire new paragraphs, and how to put these new thoughts in the proper place by cutting and taping their drafts together, or by drawing arrows from the new paragraph to the insertion point. I asked my students to tell me what they had learned about revising and editing strategies as they wrote their books. Some of the comments these sixth graders wrote:

> *I learned how to revise ... that you do an awful lot of crossing out ... I learned different punctuation ... and punctuation is really important to have in a good story ... I learned that you have to write more than one draft. I learned how to spell words like 'important'. I learned that I need quietness to write or I just write something that doesn't have anything to do with my story ... I learned that it takes a lot of punctuation to do a story ... You have to edit it. Everything has to be perfect before it goes out. You have to read the story to others to see if it's OK for other readers... I [learned] where to put commas and how to make better paragraphs. To make better illustrations on each page and also how to write on the computer. It was fun.*

These last comments are from a former resource student who no longer needs to attend resource classes this year because she is working very well within the writing and reading workshop format. (See Appendix C for a table on the types of revisions these writers engaged in while drafting their stories.)

The short lessons I gave during writing workshop covered a wide range of writing concerns. Some lessons dealt with the physical set-up of the room, where writing materials were to be found, how there had to be a ten minute silent writing period, to allow everyone to get into their writing before anyone could request a conference with another writer, where writers could go if they did not want to be asked to interrupt their writing for conferences. Other lessons dealt with the craft of writing, and how writers refined their ability to express what they meant, for instance, by showing and not just telling their readers what is going on in the story. A third category of lessons dealt with the mechanics of writing, with spelling, punctuation, the conventions of standard English. Another group of short lessons highlighted certain authors -- for instance, the author we invited to speak during "Author's Night", Deirdre Kessler, or biographical information on authors that students were reading and imitating.

I asked my writers to pick out what they had learned during our book-writing project that was most important to them. They told me:

> *I think [writing books] is hard work because you have to think and think until your brain gets sore ... Misspelled words. I didn't have a lot of these, but they can bug you something desperate!*
>
> *I learned a) to put a lead in my story so they would at least skim through the book, b) to put a lot of detail in so people would know what you're talking about, c) to skip lines and use one side of the paper.*
>
> *I learned about getting people hooked in the first paragraph. I also learned about changing sentences for better ones. Also it takes a lot of work to write a story!*
>
> *The first thing I learned was that it takes time to get the book perfect.*
>
> *I also learned how the first draft you make you just let your feelings go and you don't have to worry about corrections. After three-four drafts you start correcting, but you don't have to worry about it in your first or second draft.*

Computer-As-Word-Processor...

Computers are not available to every classroom in every school in our Unit. However, there is a philosophical commitment at the Board level to support initiatives in the purchase and use of computers in our schools. There are a number of elementary schools with one computer per grade level, and there are other schools which have just begun fund-raising with their Home and School Associations to purchase their first computer. Computers are to be found in the junior high schools in our Unit mainly in the Shop classrooms. High schools are equipped with computer labs, which are mainly utilized by students taking computer literacy courses.

In my elementary school we have five computers to serve a student body of 650 students. There is certainly a growing interest in the ways we can use computers in our classrooms on the part of many teachers. But many students have not yet had an opportunity to sit down and work on a computer in school.

In my classroom, out of twenty-nine children, four had never even sat down in front of a computer before. Five students had used computers several times in school only (from two to five times). Ten students had used computers only at home, at a friend's house, or at their parent's place of work. Two students had attended a local university summer computer camp. Eight children had used computers both at home and at school, although school use seemed limited to a particular grade level (in these cases, grade three or four). Thus, for the majority of students in my class, previous computer use was limited.

Even though previous experience was limited, my students were really looking forward to using the computers in our classroom. They told me:

> *I think computers are great! ... I hope I get to use this computer a lot ... They are a neat tool to use ... I think they're fun and I'm glad we're going to be using them ... they're challenging ... Well, I really like working on a computer. If I had one I would use it about two hours a day ... I think of it as a learning tool for people who want to work and who also want to have a lot of fun ... Even though I haven't used one I would say that they are a lot of fun, and are a life saver, because if you are writing a long story that you want to write on the computer, it doesn't make your hands so sore...*

100% of the comments were very positive; my students let me know, in no uncertain terms, how excited they were about the prospects of using a computer in our classroom!

I chose six students who had had the opportunity to use computers before to become my team of experts, my team leaders. Most of these six had no difficulty learning how to play "Where in Time is Carmen Sandiego?" They became responsible for teaching the five students on their own team how to play the game. Each team had over an hour to play the game together, to begin to become familiar with the computer keyboard and the use of the mouse, and to learn to work together and share decision-making. Students thoroughly enjoyed this introduction to our computer, and they were anxious to continue working/playing together.

The next step I took was xeroxing the Apple keyboard, and making a copy for each student. Since we only had one Apple IIgs and one Macintosh in the classroom, and twenty-nine students, computer time was at a premium. Each student took the copy of the keyboard to his or her desk, and found the letters of the alphabet, numbers, how to use the direction arrows to move the cursor up, down, or to the sides, the space bar, the delete key, the shift key, the escape key, the return key, and various marks of punctuation. Students spent some time with these sheets of paper at their desks. We played a game, when I dictated words for them to "type" in, so they could practice finding specific letters, and using the different special function keys. After students felt comfortable, and could find their way around the keyboard, each group had more practice sessions at one of the computers. Students had to type in their names, and also some sentences using punctuation, spacing, return. All of this practice took place before my students actually sat individually or in pairs in front of the computer, and began to type in the revisions they had made to their first draft.

Those revisions could not be typed in until students had completed their first drafts with paper and pencil, and these first drafts were typed into the computer, saved on a disk, and printed. When writers received their printed copies back, they would read them over. They often had already decided on many of the changes they wished to make in their stories, so they immediately set to work revising this copy. The writers would continue to work on this copy of the draft, until the story was as good as they could make it. Many conferences were requested with other students; stories and ideas were shared and seriously considered. When no further changes were contemplated, the writer could sign up for computer time to type the revisions into the story. If there was a bottleneck at the computer, which did happen occasionally, writers were expected to spend time productively, either by reconsidering their draft, or by beginning to write an About the Author page or by jumping ahead to work on a later chapter.

In spite of the hold-ups which occurred, many of my students told me that writing in the computer was one of their favourite parts of the entire book-writing process.

> *I liked working on the computer with my story ... I liked how you got to type at the computer ... [I liked] typing out*

> *our corrections on the computer ... I loved everything about it-the typing on the computer ... I liked typing in my changes on the computer ... I wished we could've typed in the first draft [too], but doing some revisions was all right.*

After each writer decided the content was completely set, he or she would go to an Editor's Circle. In that group, writers would help each other edit their stories for spellings, punctuation, paragraphing, capital letters. When the story was as perfect as each writer could possibly make it, it would be submitted to me for a final edit and print-out on the computer. If writers are going public with a particular piece of writing, I believe it should be presented in standard English, for misspelled words or inappropriate language reflect poorly on the writer. Dana writes, "I liked just about everything, but [with] all the time it took on the same story sometimes I just wanted to rip it up and throw it in the garbage. [But it was worth it.] I wrote a book in grade four (in another school), and she took the messy first copy and laminated it and put it in a book and it looks terrible".

After spending almost six weeks on the writing and publishing of their twenty-nine books, the writers in my class are anxious to continue and do more publishing. And they want to be able to continue doing as much revising as possible on a computer!

Parental Involvement in the Book-Writing Process...

When teachers and students begin a new school year, it's almost as if we are starting with a clean slate. We have to learn to trust each other; we have to learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses. We have to get to know our new classmates, and how the new class will be set up. In the same way, teachers and parents have to develop a trusting relationship. I have learned that it is especially important to spend time getting to know parents when the program being offered is in the nature of an alternative program. Parents are used to their children bringing home "the reader" for work at night, as well as "the speller", "the grammar book", and a multitude of worksheets and workbooks. In an alternative program, where the children are being taught to become more literate by reading trade books, and writing pieces of their own choice, for their own real purposes, parents and students alike have to be shown how this learning works.

In our school, we have a set of individual Parent-Teacher interviews at the end of September. I used this opportunity to explain to parents about the language programs their children would be following during their grade six year. I also discussed with them the book-writing project that their children would be involved in during October and November. When information is new, and a change from what people are used to, it takes time and patience to show how the new approach works.

One of the ways I hoped to get at how parents felt about writing and its importance in the school curriculum was by giving them a questionnaire to fill out about the subject. All of my parents were willing to fill in this form for me about their attitudes toward writing, and how much writing they themselves did in the course of a work day. When they were asked how important writing is to them in their daily life, answers ranged from, "Not very" and "Minimal" to "Writing is essential to my job", and "Very necessary -- when children are in school and I'm working evenings, I leave notes for all. Some for instruction and others to let them know I'm thinking of them". However, more parents felt that writing was important for them than not.

Many parents also supported the idea that it is very important for their children to learn to write. Two parents (5% of the total) said that writing was the most important school subject. 52.6% of the parents who responded said that writing was the second-most important school subject after reading. 18% of the parents thought that writing was the third-most important subject, while 23.6% put writing at fourth place of importance or lower. Over the course of the book-writing project, several parents reported that they felt writing had become more important as a school subject.

Many parents said that it was quite important for their children to learn to write, because having this particular skill would serve them well in future careers: "I think that being able to express themselves in writing will become a valuable asset to them in any career they choose". "It is very important for my child to learn to write well because it prepares them for future endeavours." Some parents focused on how the writing process can help us grow to understand ourselves: "It helps them to think, be creative, and express inner feelings, which they might otherwise neglect". "I think it's important because it can help them to express worries or feelings that they find hard to talk about." Other parents focused on writing as a means of self-expression and creativity: "One of John's great joys in life is writing. He really enjoys reading, and writing allows him a way to give others pleasure with his work. We encourage his writing as much as possible." "I feel strongly about this because it's a powerful tool of self-expression".

At the other end of the spectrum of responses, there were several parents who felt that writing was not one of the more important things we might learn to do:

> *Stories and poems are not important except to organize thoughts." "Not as important as normal school subjects to prepare them for higher grades.*

Parents' attitudes seemed to remain fairly constant throughout the book-writing project. Those who had felt that writing was important in September, continued to feel that way, while those parents who placed writing lower on a list of priorities at the beginning of the school year, tended to assign the same importance to writing at the end of the project.

Besides meeting all of my parents in person, explaining their children's program to them, and asking them to fill out the questionnaire about writing, I also invited all my parents to an information meeting about how the writing process works. More than a dozen parents came to this evening meeting, where we could have a informal discussion about writing. I set up several computers with Bank Street Writer III, which was the word-processing program I was using with the Apple IIgs computer. During the evening, I taught the four parents who had never used a computer before how to run the word-processing program. Their excitement filled the air! They learned an entirely new language, and because it made sense, they found that it was not so intimidating after all. They learned how to load a program disk and how to find a story on a data disk. They discovered new meanings for words like "Save", "Retrieve", "File", and "Edit". The demystifying of the computer and its jargon was a monumental step forward in computer literacy for these parents. Two of the parents who had known absolutely nothing about computers felt comfortable enough after this evening session to volunteer to come into the classroom and type my students' first drafts on the computers. One mother had never even typed before! She was very slow at finding the keys she needed, but she told me she loved it, and she'd be happy to help out on the computers in the classroom again.

Five parents came to work in the classroom during school hours, three of them more than once. Three more parents volunteered their time on several different evenings. These parents became intimately involved in watching the development of my student's stories. They told me time and time again how impressed they were with the children's imaginations, and their ability to express themselves in writing. When time came for the final Author's Night, these parents felt very close and supportive of the young authors whose work they had watched develop. This close feeling between young authors, parent volunteers and teacher was a very special result of this project, and it certainly is continuing throughout this entire school year. I should mention that I received offers of help in typing first drafts into the computers from more parents than I actually needed, because some of the first parents who came to help were able to type in a large number of stories. It took about one week to get all twenty-nine of my students' first drafts typed in on the word processing program. And after that week, the students were responsible for typing in their own revisions on the computer.

Author's Night! An Author's Night is the culmination of weeks of work, writing, thinking, sharing, writing again, illustrating, dedicating ... all the steps that are part of the process of publishing a book. And because of the parent-teacher interviews in September, the Information Night in October, and the volunteer typing effort, many of the parents of my students were part of this entire creative process. I decided to extend an invitation to all the parents of my students to their own special workshop, which would be held prior to the book-launching proper. I called the workshop "A Happening", and didn't specify that it was going to be a writing workshop. I didn't want to scare any of the potential participants off through fear of the unknown!

Many of my parents came to the Happening. They reacted with surprise and not a little dismay when I and our language arts consultant told them that they would be doing some writing for the next hour. Afterwards, one parent wrote, "This ‘happening’ should or could have been called ‘Some anxious moments’, or ‘When was the last time you were an author’. I felt anxious, insecure, and rather frightened, to be truthful". Another parent wrote, "On entering the writing room and finding we had to write a story, I thought, now I know what my daughter goes through. My mind went BLANK, blanker than usual. I had writer's block. I found, however, even answering this question, once I got started, it wasn't really all that bad, as long as no one other than myself has to read this mess". And a third parent wrote, "I think the experience tonight helped me to better understand what is expected of the children".

Bringing understanding by means of demonstration was what I was trying to do by inviting parents to this workshop. Our language arts consultant did a wonderful job in modelling the kinds of writing responses she wanted. Parents were shown how to brainstorm possible topics for writing. We kept the focus on family stories, since each person in the room would have some family stories he or she could write about. After brainstorming topics, parents chose a partner to discuss their possible topic selections. After each partner had discovered what it was they wanted to write about, the entire group began to write. After writing for a period of time, these adult writers were invited to share some of their writing with the group. Finally one brave mother got up to read her story about grade 11 French to the group. She received a resounding hand of applause as she completed her reading; parents were really beginning to understand what the writing process of committing your own thoughts and feelings to paper was all about. Parents also began to understand how difficult and demanding the process can be. This was made clear in the very empathetic comments that the adults recorded in the young authors' comment books later that night. "This was definitely harder than it looks!" ... Dear Catherine, It was awesome to hear you read your work. It was great! Keep up the good work and never stop writing" ... and from a mother who had typed in some of the first drafts in my classroom: "Mary, your story was very good. You really did a lot of work on it since I did the first draft. It turned out really great".

Through discussions, meetings, volunteering their time, and engaging in the writing process themselves, the parents of the students in my classroom developed a much clearer understanding of what the writing process entails. They became members of the club of writers, if only for one short evening. But the depth of understanding that those writing encounters allowed continued on past that evening. Parents and children had a common point of reference; there have been on-going discussions in a number of families about the student's writing.

DISCUSSION OF THE PROJECT

The Writing Process...

Early in this report I discussed how the book-writing project was organized in the classroom. What went on in the classroom was not so different from what an observer would see happening in any process-oriented classroom. Student writers were given time every day to write. They were allowed to choose their own topics for writing. They had the opportunity to conference with other writers including their teacher about their pieces of writing. However, there was a difference in the rhythm of the writing year for this class.

In many process classrooms, writers are invited to go public with their writing when they have a piece that they want to share with an audience. Throughout a regular school year, writers might publish one story in every five to eight stories written. There are usually a number of children publishing pieces of writing at one time, but not the whole class.

Our special situation this year had its benefits and its drawbacks. All the children had to learn to deal with a deadline. This affected those very bright children who would continue to write and revise and would have difficulty coming to the conclusion that they were ready to publish a piece, because they could always improve it. The fact of a real deadline also affected children with learning difficulties, who often feel that what they have to say is not worth publishing. This deadline was not an artificial one, as all students had to have books completed for the Author's Night. There would be an audience there, ready to hear the books being launched. The young writers would want to present their work. The existence of a specific deadline helped overcome the problem of procrastination.

The writing workshop began very intensively this year; everyone in the class was deeply involved. During the book-writing project, most of the writing took the form of stories and a few poems. Immediately after our Author's Night, which provided strong positive feedback, the writers in my class were anxious to continue their writing. Two girls are collaborating on a choose-your-own-adventure story. Another writer is completing a book of poems. Some of the boys in the class have learned how to compose business letters and address envelopes, and they are busy writing to different NHL teams requesting autographs and posters. Two other students are working on ABC books that they are going to donate to younger classes. Another writer is completing a sequel to his first published book on space.

The range of interests and needs is quite varied. Yet all these writers are able to come together, to conference with one another, to respond to someone else's writing as a reader, to support each other, as each writer tries to make the writing match the intended meaning. There is a collaborative, workshop atmosphere in the classroom which is stronger and more deeply felt because of our group publishing experience.

As the students turned to their writing, they approached it with a much better appreciation of the work involved, and many specific strategies that they had learned from their first publishing experience. For most of the children in my class, this book-writing project was their first experience with going public with their writing, and sharing in front of an audience. The experience had given them much valuable information on what works for a reader, and how they might improve their writing in their next story.

> *I am planning to put lots of detail in this story to make it sound even more interesting"... "I would keep the readers in suspense"... "First I will brainstorm my ideas and then write a first draft"... "First I'd dig up some more imaginative names and start an imagining spurt. Then I'd write whatever comes to my head.*

Author's Night was an extremely important part of the publishing process. Having to get up in front of an audience and share your writing can be a daunting experience for anyone, and these young authors learned to value what they had written and what they wanted to share. Before the book launch, however, my students attended an hour-long workshop on the process of publishing your books given by Deirdre Kessler, an author of books for young readers. The children were fascinated with the insights Deirdre had to share with them as she discussed where she gets some of her writing ideas, how the publishers receive manuscripts, what happens to a piece of writing after it is accepted by a publisher. My students asked questions and pursued lines of thought that interested them as writers. They knew they were writers as well as this lady who had published commercially.

Author's Night (the workshop and book launching), had a strong impact on my students. "I really enjoyed Author's Night. I'm glad Deirdre Kessler came. She really taught me some amazing things"... "I enjoyed listening to her explain writing, also I enjoyed her story about Mia and Jake. I think this was a very good experience not just for me, but for the rest of the class"... "I hope we can do this project again ... I really liked the writing class".

This concentrated effort by all the students writing together had a positive effect on the class. Writing together and sharing stories allowed my students to get to know each other better. Similarly, I obtained more insights into my students earlier in the year because of the book-writing project. One of the reasons this happened was because I asked my students to write almost daily in a Writing Log. This log was a record of the work they did during that day's writing workshop, as well as a place to keep a list of the different writing strategies they had learned. I have found these logs invaluable in helping me understand my students' thoughts and feelings about the entire process we were going through together. Keeping the log also helped my students begin to step back and reflect, to see where they had been and where they might be going to. I found that keeping learning logs is one way of helping students write to learn what it is they are feeling, thinking, and what is important to them, as well as helping them learn to write.

COMPUTER-AS-WORD-PROCESSOR

I learned again in the course of this project just how comfortable children are with using the new technology. Even if they have not had the opportunity to use a computer before, most children have played games that are very similar to those found for computers. The children have no hesitation in sitting down at the computer keyboard and seeing what they can make happen.

The same does not hold true for us adults, specifically the parents of my students, who helped enter the first drafts. The first thing I had to teach them at the Information Night was that the computer did not blow up if you pressed the wrong button! As these parents got more comfortable with the computer and the word-processing program, they told me that they felt as if they were finally understanding a part of our lives that had been passing them by before. They really appreciated having the opportunity to work on a computer in a structured setting, with the support of another adult and even sometimes the children.

Writers, especially young ones, can find the physical demands of writing thoughts on paper difficult. "The only problem was that your hands got sore after you wrote a certain amount of your story so your ideas were no good after that". Writing with a word-processing program alleviates that problem; children love to type in their revisions and new thoughts. If each new draft of a story required an entirely new handwritten copy, there would be few drafts produced! I have taught young writers revising strategies such as cut-and-tape so they do not have to write an entirely new copy for another draft, yet the most eagerly anticipated way of revising is putting changes into the story on the computer and printing out an entirely new copy. It is very satisfying for young writers to begin again with a fresh copy; it allows them to tackle the job of making the story mean exactly what they want with renewed vigour! The average number of drafts produced by the writers in my classroom for the book-writing project was 3.8, almost four drafts per student. These numbers do not include the final, published copy. These are drafts that were laboured over, crossed out, and cut up. More quality changes were allowed to occur because the writers could begin again with a new copy of their story. (See Appendix C: Revising) Catherine says, "Today in writing time I had a great time! After recess I'm typing on the computer. I learned how to make new paragraphs and when to use quotation marks. I can't wait to go on the computer. It will be a ball. I feel better about my story and I probably will add more if I have time".

The difficulties we encountered revolved around the number of computers available for classroom work. During the book-writing project, we had an Apple llgs and a Macintosh in the room. We could have used another three computers while children were working very hard on revising the drafts of their stories, for about a four-week period. Oftentimes, writers had to think of something else to do while they were waiting for their turn at the computer. When twenty-nine writers produce almost four drafts each, that requires a good chunk of time at the computer for each writer. The children were very patient, though. They understood that they had to wait their turn, and instead spend their time conferencing or planning illustrations, or perhaps planning out another chapter for their story.

Some of the children who benefited the most from having access to the computer and a word-processing program were my students with learning difficulties. These are children whose ideas are often unreadable, whose spelling and handwriting seriously interfere with their ability to communicate in writing. I had to ask one resource student to sit with me at the computer as I typed in the first draft of his story, because even I could not decipher his writing! Yet as a clean copy almost magically appears from the printer, this writer waxed enthusiastic once more about working on his story. "I'm working on my deacson page and taping today I lave taping and I have to do my elasosont still, and Im looking fowed to look at my story". [I'm working on my dedication page and typing today. I love typing. And I have to do my illustrations still. And I'm looking forward to looking at my story.] For this student, being able to type his story on the computer is a lifesaver!

The three students in the class who have been involved in resource are the writers who wrote the shortest books: two hundred twenty-eight words, one hundred eighty-eight words, and three hundred seven words, respectively. They worked very hard on their books, laboring over three different drafts each. When we tallied up their revisions, we found that they had made forty-six, forty-seven, and forty-nine changes in the drafts of their stories. This kind of revising had been unheard of for any of them before this project. Jennifer said, "[I was excited when I saw] the first typewritten draft. When I got it back, i felt so much better when I got that. But all of it was fun, and I hope we do it again". Jennifer is doing it again; she is working on another book. She doesn't know if she will be publishing this book or another, but she is deeply involved in the writing process. James said, "I like writing the story, but I hated the short time we had to do them. Writing is fun if you have lots of time and I wish we could have typed in the first draft, but doing some corrections was all right. I want to write soon, so I don't forget my ideas like last time. I had a whole story planned out and I forgot it all and I have a good idea [now] and I don't want to forget it so I hope we do some writing soon so I can write the story".

Children with learning difficulties are not the only writers in the class who have an interest is writing, who have a drive to write, who are motivated to express themselves in words. But they are some of the students whose attitude towards writing has undergone the greatest shift. Jennifer's mother wrote this letter to express what she saw happening in her daughter's attitude.

> *Jennifer's whole outlook has changed this year. She enjoys and looks forward to school ... I'm sure I'm safe in saying that she did not read two complete books in the whole of last year. So far this year she has surpassed that by about three times. It is my feeling that [this] class has brought around this remarkable and very welcome change. I wish Jennifer had been exposed to something like this in her earlier years of school. It would have eliminated a lot of frustration on her part and helped her enjoy her studies.*

Within the writing workshop, the ideas from all writers are valued and given careful consideration. Writers collaborate with each other, to the benefit of all. Each child has learned that he or she has something special and individual to share, which would be lost if that writer was not given the time to write, the choice of his or her topic, and the opportunity to respond to the writing of others.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE BOOK-WRITING PROCESS...

It is not so long since many of the parents of my students were in school themselves, yet very few of them would have been involved in a classroom where reading and writing were taught as a process of making meaning. As mentioned before, I had to do quite a bit of explaining and reassuring before parents were comfortable with this "different" way of teaching their children. Parents had a chance to be involved in the classroom in an active way, by coming in to type first drafts on the computer. They were given the opportunity to become more knowledgeable about the writing process and how it can work at the parent's information night. I sent a number of letters home, keeping parents informed about the progress we were making on the book-writing project. And finally, as the culmination of six weeks of hard work, we had Author's Night, to which a parent or a representative of almost every family came.

I extended many invitations to parents to get involved over the first few months of the school year. Many parents accepted these invitations, and by their involvement developed a much better understanding of their child's academic program, how the class was set up, and the type of work done there.

Author's Night was truly a special evening in the life of this class. I have already mentioned how important the interactions were to the writers in my class, as they talked with Deirdre Kessler and then launched their own books. It was also a very important evening for the parents. They were challenged to do some writing of their own, in a supportive atmosphere. They had the chance to meet other school friends of their own children. And they had the opportunity to feel pride in their own child's achievements, as the new authors launched their books. Jane writes:

> *At first my Dad didn't want to go. When he got home he said that he was glad that I talked him into going. He also said that he was proud of me, which made me feel pretty good because he hardly ever says anything like that!*
>
> *Guess what Dad put in my Comment book? He put, 'Can I read it again?' Do you know what? He still talks a lot about how much fun it was ... I had so much fun. I hope we can write another book and have another get-together so my Mom can come too!*

The parents of my students have had a number of occasions to become involved with their child's school, class, and program this year. I have had more discussions with parents this year than I ever have had before. Through the book-writing project, my parents and I have come to know each other quite well! The trust I spoke of earlier has been developing; parents feel more comfortable coming into the school building now. Discussions with their child about what went on in school on a particular day have become more meaningful because parents themselves were involved in writing and sharing their work in front of an audience. It has become easier to understand what their child is trying to say, when he or she is discussing Writing Workshop.

I will give the last word in this section to the parents:

> *At first I was skeptical about the idea. I wasn't sure that it would be possible to write on such short notice. I must confess I was wrong and I should have known better in the first place. I did enjoy the process because it made me think about things and events that are important to me. The way the process was introduced was very good, and non-threatening.*
>
> *I was a little apprehensive at first but once things got going it was very interesting. Once I picked a topic and started writing it was actually fun and I was amazed at how many things I remembered about my time at my Grandparents.*
>
> *Although I will never be an author this was a fun experience. The hour went by in what seemed like ten minutes. I am glad my child has had an opportunity to experience this while at a young age. There are very few 'rich' authors, but it certainly expands one's horizons.*

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

1. The time and energy expended in setting up Writer's Workshop in the classroom is an investment in students' increasing ability to learn independently and communicate their meaning effectively. Publishing is an important part of a workshop, since these young writers have to see that there is an audience for their writing beyond their teacher. Besides the commitment of class time, there also has to be an allocation of dollars for binding costs, cover stock and xeroxing costs. Because this program is an alternative program, and because there are some costs associated with it, administrative support is almost essential. In my school, this program had the enthusiastic support of principal and vice-principal. If it had not, I would have found it very difficult to function, and to invite parents and children to celebrate these young writers' efforts.

2. Use of a computer and a word-processing program is not a necessity in a Writing Workshop. I believe that use of this technology accomplishes a number of important educational goals: Students in the class are encouraged to become computer-literate. They begin to see that there are other uses for computers besides games. Their parents, as well, are invited to get some hands-on experience in using a computer as a word processor, which allows some of these adults a chance to see a benign application of computer technology. In addition to encouraging computer literacy, use of a word-processing program frees young writers from copying their drafts over by hand, and gives them that time to spend in actually working on the ideas in their writing, resulting in a higher quality piece of writing. This is particularly important for children with learning difficulties. Also, when students are working on the computer, their final copy is already typed. There is no need to look for mentors, or school secretaries, or parents to do the final typing. When the piece is ready to be published, it is completely ready.

3. When students are involved in a writing workshop, it is important for them to know their published pieces will actually become writing that is available for the public. During this project, every student in my class was expected to publish a book at the same time. During a normal school year, everyone in the class is not publishing at the exact same time, since writers choose only one out of every certain number of pieces to carry through to publication. Publishing is a hectic occupation, which is quite intense and demanding. If I chose to have the whole class publish at one and the same time again, because of the benefits of parental involvement and the celebration of Author's Night, I think I would publish a class anthology of some kind, where writers could choose to submit poetry or a very short story, and we would publish the book together. Every writer would still receive his or her own copy of the book, and a copy would be donated to the school library.

4. Two copies of every original book are made. Each writer keeps the original work; then one copy is put in the classroom library, while a second copy is donated to the school library. The library copies are carded, and library users are allowed to sign the books out as part of the library's permanent collection. The stories written by young writers are some of the most popular books in the library and the authors are fascinated to see how many readers are signing their works out!

5. Author's Night is a celebration of young authors, their parents and their teacher. A book launch is a traditional means of celebrating the publication of a new book, and Author's Night is our school-based adaptation. There were two innovations that were introduced this year with the project; one was the young writer's workshop with a published author, and the second was the writing workshop we had with the parents. Meeting and talking with a writer was one of the highlights of the celebration for my student authors. Parents told me that participating in their own writing workshop helped them understand so much better what their children were striving to do. Both of these new components added substantially to the success of Author's Night.

6. Products are not as important as the writing process, yet it is important to highlight their completion for individuals. This is true for parents as well as their children. For this reason the stories that the parents produced during the workshop will also be published. These stories were written in a very short period of time, and parents did not have time to work through a number of drafts, yet it will still be important to give these adult writers an opportunity to see their words in print, to share some of their thinking with their children. Only stories from those parents who were willing to share their work will be included in a small anthology.

7. There is one other way of keeping the memories of the Author's Night alive, that I have used in every Author's Night I have organized. Each student writer is given a small booklet with pages for comments by the listeners as they receive the new books. These Comment Books then become the young writer's permanent record of all the positive feedback he or she received after the book was shared with the audience. What child would not feel wonderful when rereading comments like, "Your story shows a lot of imagination. Maybe someday you will write a mystery novel like Agatha Christie!" or "It shows in your story that you knew your subject well -- and the action was exciting! Keep on writing -- you never know who'll be the next great author!"

8. The children (and parents) who were involved in this book-writing project learned experientially from each other. Children enjoyed watching their parents go through the same type of writing process they themselves had been going through. Young writers learn to support and encourage each other, and to respect other learners for the contributions each was able to make.

Children began to realize that different classmates had various areas of expertise, and that they could call upon these experts for help.

9. The project has seemingly heightened motivation for writing. My students came into school the day after Author's Night wanting assurances that we would have another Author's Night later in the year; they were ready to begin work on their next stories. These young writers also have begun to read books like writers; they are interested and able to discuss authors with their families at home.

10. The Writing Workshop and book publishing project facilitated parent involvement. Such involvement fostered understanding of the classroom activities, familiarization between parent and teacher, and a supportive milieu for the young writers' efforts. In this way the assistance and personal experience of the parent was an important element in the process.

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APPENDIX A. STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES

1. When I write, I want to ____
____

2. Writing makes me feel ____
____

3. If I could choose how to spend my time, I would spend:
(no time) (some time) (lots of time) writing

4. When I think of writing, I think of - (write down 4 different words here)

____

____

____

____

****

Read the statements, then circle the number that describes how strongly you agree or disagree with each one.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly agree	mildly agree	No opinion	mildly disagree	strongly disagree

A. I like to write stories:

1 ______ 2_______3 ______4 _______5 _______

B. I like to write poems:

1 ______ 2_______3 ______4 _______5 _______

C. I like to write letters:

1 ______ 2_______3 ______4 _______5 _______

D. I have written some pieces outside of school:

1 ______ 2______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5 ______

E. Even when I am not writing, I sometimes think about ideas for stories or poems:

1 ______ 2______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5 ______

F. When I write, my first copy is usually my good copy:

1 ______ 2______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5 ______

G. It is easy for me to think of ideas or stories to write about:

1 ______ 2______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5 ______

H. I have written stories on a typewriter:

1 ______ 2______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5 ______

I. I have written stories on a computer:

1 ______ 2______ 3 ______ 4 ______ 5 ______

APPENDIX B - PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name ______________________________ Date ________________

1. What kinds of writing do you do each day ... at home or work?
2. How many minutes a day do you spend writing?
3. How important is writing to you in your daily life?
4. How do you feel about the writing you do?
5. When you write, how important is it for you to have a perfect first copy?
6. How important is spelling in the writing process? Can you elaborate on your answer?
7. What do you believe people have to do in order to write well?
8. How important do you feel it is for your child to learn to write stories or poems or letters?
9. Please list these school subjects in order of importance: reading, math, writing, spelling, science, social studies, health

   a) ____________________________

   b) ____________________________

   c) ____________________________

   d) ____________________________

   e) ____________________________

   f) ____________________________

   g) ____________________________

10. Are you interested in helping out with our class writing project? __________
    If you are, more information will follow.

APPENDIX C

REVISING

Average number of drafts written by each student	3.8
Average number of words in final drafts of student books	877
Range of number of words per book	188 - 2588
Median number of words in student books	828
Average number of revisions per story	124

****

TYPES OF REVISIONS

a) Changing one word for a better word	11.5%
b) Adding one word	5.0%
c) Taking out a word	6.5%
d) Adding an entire phrase, sentence or paragraph	41.6%
e) Deleting an entire	5.3%
f) Changing a spelling	11.2%
g) Putting in punctuation marks	11.4%
h) Putting in capital letters	4.0%
i) Changing the set-up of sentences to make a new paragraph	3.5%

NURTURING EARLY LITERACY: A LITERATURE BASED PROGRAM FOR AT-RISK FIRST GRADERS*

Elizabeth L. Strong
Lori Wilkie

In our endeavors to unlock the mysteries hidden behind literacy development, a key element has surfaced which is extremely influential - STORY. Stories not only awaken and heighten our narrative way of thinking, but also form one of the most essential ingredients in learning how to read and write, i.e., in becoming literate.

As the young literacy learners experience literature, they implicitly learn about their world, the complexities of its people and language. With more stories, their personal, linguistic and cultural knowledge increasingly grows, building a storehouse of valuable information that they use to make sense of their surroundings.

Moreover, from hearing and interacting with stories and poems, children privately teach themselves how to negotiate meaning of the decontextualized language that they experience in various texts. They learn such literacy strategies as how stories are constructed, how they lean on each other to create new ones, how they have embedded meanings, how language works on a page, how text and illustrations are interwoven to present a whole story, how to use life experiences to bring greater understanding to a text and how written language has special structural features.

Studies related to specific uses of literature have revealed the immense influence stories and poems have on nurturing literacy and literary development. The extensive value of reading aloud to children has been cited by many researchers. In fact, it could be stated that reading aloud to children is one of the most essential means of insuring school success. Through stories children's language facility is vastly enhanced and enriched as well as their ability to comprehend the meaning of the written word. Their sense of story, its structure and meaning, is developed which heightens the children's ability to predict and interpret stories and read words. In addition, their knowledge of the behaviors and functions of reading and writing is increasingly heightened and their love for books is immeasurably nurtured and cultivated.

A more recent focus of research regarding children's literature and literacy learning has been on the significance of re-reading stories. Even though the investigations have been few in number, and are often case studies, they have revealed promising results and implications for promoting literacy growth. Achieving a greater understanding of the deep structure of a story occurs after a number of revisits which, in turn, broaden the children's knowledge of the text. Moreover, repeated readings refine and develop the complexity of children's responses to stories, providing them more opportunities to learn how to mean.

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*Editor's Note: This report contains excerpts from the 210-page original.

In addition, the impact of literature on children's writing development has begun to surface. It is through first hearing literature that the children begin to explore many aspects of written language, e.g., structural features, forms, functions and ideas.

It is evident from the research literature that children's literature can have a tremendous influence on the development of young learners' literacy skills. What appears to be a void in the research is, however, investigations related to examining the effects of children's literature on the totality of literacy development, especially of at-risk children.

This study is designed to fill this void.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design of this study was of a naturalistic nature to examine the ways in which children's literature influenced and advanced the development of six at-risk First Graders' literacy skills and strategies. Since the study took an ethnographic participant-observer approach, the data collected were descriptive and reflective in format. Other considerations that reflect ethnographic research were also adhered to: the investigation was conducted in a particular setting, the researcher was the main source of data collection, the focus was on processes rather than products, and the data were analyzed inductively (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Selection of Population

The selection of the six children for this study occurred after they had been in First Grade for four weeks. The teacher based her decision on information gathered from the children's school records and conversations with the children's Kindergarten teacher, her observations of the children during different literacy events, samples of the children's writing and results on "The Diagnostic Survey" (Clay, 1979).

Time Frame of the Study

Data for this study were gathered over the course of eight school weeks. Two weeks prior to the study, the investigator observed in the selected setting for familiarization and acclimatization purposes. This time allowed the children, teacher and investigator to become accustomed to each other's presence. As well, it permitted the investigator to collect contextual data on the small group and the classroom surroundings. In particular, the investigator tried to gain insights into the composition of the group, instructional routines and activities, literacy events, availability of print and art materials, teacher-child and child-child interactions. Moreover, the time served as a gestation period for the investigator to think about and clarify the research questions and data collecting procedures. It provided the investigator the opportunity to immerse herself in the classroom activities and to begin to narrow her focus.

Once the preliminary visiting was completed and the study became a reality, the investigator visited the classroom five days a week for a ninety minute session (10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon). After the completion of the eight weeks, the investigator and the teacher decided to continue the study for the remainder of the year. The investigator would visit the classroom twice a week until June 1991, to observe the ongoing literacy development of the study's six "at-risk" children.

Data Collection

The purpose of the investigator was to describe the literacy events that occurred during the literacy session, the components of the literature-based program used and how they were integrated, the materials utilized, and the teacher and children's interactions and responses. In order to describe these events, she observed what the teacher and children did, things they made and used, and listened to what they said.

The investigator used different methods of collecting data and making inferences to gain as much information as possible regarding these activities. Daily fieldnotes were written and audio tapings made; informal interviewing was conducted; children's art and written materials were collected as well as selected tapes of text readings; and a formal measure, the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1979) was used. A most informative and valuable source of data collection was the daily journal of the teacher, who took it upon herself to express her views and concerns of each day's literacy session. She openly offered these writings to the investigator.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As the data were gathered, they were dated, numbered and inductively analyzed in order to search for patterns and understanding. The analytic task, interpreting and making sense out of the collected materials, was influenced by the purpose of this study, the nature of its problem and the theoretical perspectives that "inform the research problem and intrigue the researcher" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981, p.64).

Specific analysis tactics, ways of drawing and verifying conclusions, were employed during the analytical process to reach the "final" conclusions. Three major tactics were utilized: noting patterns or themes, sorting into categories, and counting.

THE TEACHER, THE CHILDREN, THE CLASSROOM, THE PROGRAM

The Teacher**

The teacher is the facilitator, the problem-solver, "the choreographer" (Hepler, 1982) of the literacy context. It is her knowledge, beliefs and attitudes toward the literacy learners and the literacy context that affect the instructional decisions and practices in the classroom. Her theoretical perspectives about language, literacy and the learner are reflected in her instructional practices. Thus, in the following section, I present information about Mrs. Z's professional orientation which influenced the literacy context she developed.

Teaching for Mrs. Z. is based on three premises. The first being that school must be a happy and supportive environment for each child. Learning, she maintains, occurs more easily when one is content with being in school. This was evident from the study. Her desire to create a caring, happy child-centred classroom was always foremost in her mind and daily actions. For instance, Mrs. Z. always commented on the children's success, regardless how minimal and encouraged them to "try again".

Another premise that Mrs. Z. adheres to is that learning must be meaningful and purposeful if children are to retain information, skills and strategies. Skills and strategies need to be taught in the context of the children's own work, not in isolation. This was apparent in her interest and determination to expose the children to Shared Reading/Writing each day as well as conference with them using their written work.

** Note: In order to guard the privacy of the teacher and children in the study, they will be referred to by fictitious names.

Teachers need to be firm but friendly was another premise of Mrs. Z. Respect for others is important. Ground rules need to be adhered to by all. If one child did something unkind to another child, Mrs. Z. chatted with the child and had him/her apologize for the wrongdoing. This condition she believes needs to exist in a classroom in order to optimize learning.

The Children

The choice of six children for the study was made by Mrs. Z. from her classroom observations, information gathered from the children's school records and conversations with the children's Kindergarten teacher, samples of the children's writing and results of their Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1979). From these data, Mrs. Z. concluded that these children had the lowest literacy levels in her heterogeneous class of twenty-six children.

Part of the assessment for the children was the completion of three areas of the Clay's Diagnostic Survey. This individualized battery of diagnostic measures is designed to provide a comprehensive picture of each child's literacy development.

The pre-test results of the Diagnostic Survey administered to the six children are shown in Table 1. Since Mrs. Z. conducted the assessments during class time, variations in testing data are evident. The table presents the results of each child's achievement in each selected section of the survey (the denominator indicates possible score).

It was from the pre-test results that Mrs. Z. gained insights about each child's literacy strengths and weaknesses, leading her to identify specific areas that required assistance. Her aim was to ensure that each child developed a self-improving strategy system that would guide him/her to becoming literate.

Table 1. Diagnostic Survey Pre-Test Results

Name	Letter Identification 10.1/4.90	Concepts About Print 10.1/4.90	Running Record 10.10/15.90
Dianna	78%	66%	-
Charlie	66%	16%	-
Martin	59%	37%	-
Scotty	70%	58%	-
Simon	39%	37%	-
Susan	47%	49%	-

The group was comprised of four boys and two girls. At the beginning of the study, their ages ranged from 5 years 9 months to 6 years 5 months.

Five of the children completed Kindergarten at their present school and one completed Kindergarten in another school in the same school district.

Speech difficulties were apparent in two of the children, Dianna and Scotty. However, the difficulties did not appear to interfere with their desire to converse with anyone, especially the teacher. It was apparent that the speech difficulties interfered with the children's writing, e.g., Scotty wrote "Wosie" for "Rosie".

The Classroom Setting

The physical arrangement of any classroom is generally personal and reflects the teacher's perspectives on teaching and learning, her personality as well as her understanding of the children's needs and interests and the instructional program to be implemented. Moreover, it evolves gradually in accordance with all other developing aspects of the literacy context.

The setting of Mrs. Z.'s classroom was no different. No set formula was followed, but rather she worked through the process of discovery, not prescription, to create a purposeful, flexible design that led to a natural, free-flowing milieu.

The entire classroom is used and the children have the freedom to venture to all areas of the room.

The classroom included a listening station, located along the South wall. Mrs. Z. had taped many of the stories she had read aloud to the children. The children used the station at will, but on occasions Mrs. Z. had select children listen to a story for specific reasons.

The Reading Centre was equipped with cushions and carpet pieces to allow the children to make comfortable reading spaces. Here many of the school's learning resource centre books were housed along with the classroom library books. The children read usually independently in this area during Re-Reading Familiar Books time. On occasion partner reading occurred.

The East wall was used completely to display the children's writing and art creations.

The entire length of the North wall was comprised of book shelving. This was the area where the multi-copies of books, such as *The Cat on the Mat* (Wildsmith) and *A Dark, Dark Tale* (Brown) as well as the single copies of predictable books were displayed. Mrs. Z.'s desk was also near this wall.

The children's individual desks were located near the centre of the room. Much individual and collaborative written work was carried out here.

Hearing stories and poems, as a whole group or small group, always took place on the west side of the room. The area was furnished with a white wicker chair which became known as the "read aloud" chair. If Mrs. Z. sat in the chair, the children knew it was time for read aloud. The children had the freedom to sit there if they were reading aloud to a group or during Re-Reading Familiar Books time. Needless to say, the chair received an abundance of use. This area was also the area where Shared Reading/Writing took place.

Literacy Learning Resources

Don Holdaway (1979) writes in regard to early literacy reading materials that:

> Children should experience all the rich and special powers of the written word. More than ever before there is a need to introduce children to a satisfying literature, to use such materials at the centre of instruction...(p. 191)

This was so in the study. Children's literature was the core literacy resource for the instructional program.

Since the class had few of the books listed, most of the grant money received for this study was funnelled to this area. In addition, books of interest to the children were signed out from the school's learning resource centre.

The class collection, paperback and hardback, grew gradually. Too many new books at one time overwhelmed the children. It was decided to add two or three new books per week.

The growth of the book collection is evident from the chart, Table 2. It compares the number and type of books available to the children at the beginning of the investigation and what was accessible at the conclusion.

Table 2. Comparison Chart of Available Familiar Books

Book Category	10-01-90	11-30-90
Children's Literature	17	70
Children's Own Stories	-	7
Big Books	-	12

In addition to the books, Mrs. Z. had other library resources for the children to use that were created during the investigation. A very important source was the children's own stories which they wrote independently or through Shared Writing.

Selection of Books

"Only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for the young", said Walter de la Mare (1942, p. 9) in talking about books for children. This statement is just as relevant to the books we choose for at-risk children to hear and read as it is to any other child. It was truly applicable to the selection of books for the six children in this study.

The following text characteristics, adapted from Rhodes (1981) and Huck et al (1987), were considered in making the choice for the children in the beginning stages of reading:

1. Rhythmical, repetitive, or cumulative patterns. Repeated words, phrases, or themes in a pattern that can be discerned after a few pages, e.g., *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin), *You Can't Catch Me* (Oppenheim), *This Is The Bear* (Hayes).

2. Familiar Stories or Story Lines. Texts familiar to the children, e.g. *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* (illustrated by Brown), *The Three Bears* (Galdone), *The Great Big Enormous Turnip* (Tolstoy).

3. Familiar Songs and Rhymes. Texts children may have heard before, e.g., *Each Peach Pear Plum* (Ahlberg), *Ten In a Bed* (Rees), *Mary Wore Her Red Dress and Henry Wore His Green Sneakers* (Peek).

4. Familiar Sequences. Numbers, days of the week, months, e.g., *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle), *Cookie's Week* (Ward), *I Hunter* (Hutchins).

5. A Good Match Between Text and Illustrations. Illustrations that enhance and extend the story, making it easier to predict the meaning of text, e.g., *You'll Soon Grow Into Them Titch* (Hutchins), *The Little Red Hen* (Galdone).

6. Predictable Plots. Incidents that occur which are predictable because of the readers or listeners' literacy and/or world knowledge, e.g., *Benny Bakes A Cake* (Rice), *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* (Burningham), *You'll Soon Grow Into Them Titch* (Hutchins).

7. Story Structure. Unfamiliar stories that have well constructed storylines, e.g., *The Doorbell Rang* (Hutchins), *Stone Soup* (Ross), *Pumpkin, Pumpkin* (Titherington).

In addition to these text characteristics, Mrs. Z. and I were guided by other selection principles, including knowledge of the children's interests and needs as well as their reading ability.

By the end of the study the six children had available to them a rich collection of hardback and paperback books of 70 titles. In addition, multi-copies of some titles, e.g., Wildsmith's *All Fall Down*, Ginsburg's *The Chick and the Duckling*, were available. The children's own stories also became a part of the class collection. Such collaborative texts as, *Where's Spot*? and individual texts, e.g., *The Chick Went For a Walk* by Dianna added flavour to the collection and were visited many times.

Big books, commercially-made and children-made, were also part of the collection.

Arrangement of Time

The literacy session was scheduled for five days a week, from 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon. However, Mrs. Z. often extended the ninety minute session.

Mrs. Z. is a firm believer that reading aloud is one of the most important literacy events influencing literacy growth and enticing children to revisit the written word. Hence, she often invited the children to hear new or revisited stories and poems two or more times a day. These times were in addition to the Read Aloud time during the literacy session. Furthermore, she occasionally continued a literacy extension activity, such as completing the survey chart regarding the children's favourite Pat Hutchins' book, in the afternoon.

The children periodically took ownership of enhancing their literacy development within their classroom. For example, during indoor recess, after lunch and school they were seen reading aloud to their real or imaginary friend. Susan was seen often engaged in such an activity. Reading the charts around the room was another extension daily taking place outside the scheduled literacy session.

Although the time for the literacy session was scheduled and Mrs. Z. usually kept within the allocated limit, her mind was continually searching for avenues to increase the at-risk children's exposure to books and literacy extensions. She frequently shared some of the literacy activities with her fellow colleagues, and they in turn tried them in their classroom.

The Components of a Literacy Session

The literature-based program developed for the six at-risk children in this study included eight components: Re-Reading Familiar Books, Read Aloud, Shared Reading, Shared Writing, Independent Writing, Extensions, Monitoring and Home Reading. The following sections describe each of these components.

Re-Reading Familiar Books

Frank Smith (1971, 1983, 1986, 1987) states repeatedly that if we want children to become proficient readers they **must** be given the opportunity to read, i.e., practise reading. They need time to work things out for themselves and promote their independence in reading. In this study, time for the at-risk children to enjoy books with their other twenty peers and to "try out and practice" their reading strategies was referred to as Re-Reading Familiar Books.

Mrs. Z. had scheduled time for Re-Reading Familiar Books during every literacy session from the inception of the study. However, over the course of the investigation the scheduled time period changed in its length.

For the first two weeks, five minutes were allotted to reading and sharing familiar books. However, Mrs. Z. and I noted that there were a number of valid reasons to extend this time. First, as the children became more familiar with the books and more confident and successful in their reading, they demanded more time to read and share more books.

A second reason for lengthening the time for Re-Reading Familiar Books was the children's desire to read indepth stories with complex language structures, e.g., on October 23, 1990, Scotty's attempt to complete *The Wheels on the Bus* before going to a new task took him twenty minutes.

Another reason for extending the Re-Reading Familiar Books time was the children's interest in reading more books. For instance on October 30, 1990, Simon browsed and read the following books: *Rosie's Walk*, *Where's Spot?*, *The Napping House* and *Each Peach Pear Plum*.

For these reasons, Mrs. Z. wisely decided to increase the time for Re-Reading Familiar Books from five minutes at the beginning of the study to 10-15 minutes by the end of the study. Flexibility of time was one of Mrs. Z.'s pedagogical beliefs.

The children developed certain favourites as they became more versed in storylines. Occasionally, their preferences were so strong that they were seen convincing another child to read a special book.

During the time for Re-Reading Familiar Books, various forms of reading became evident. The most common form was reading independently. Each child selected a book and found a place, e.g., at a desk, on the floor or in the read aloud area, to read and/or browse. Some days, a child read aloud for the entire time.

Partner reading was another mode of reading that occurred during the time for Re-Reading Familiar Books. This form of reading involved at least two or more individuals reading and sharing a book together.

After the second week of the study, Mrs. Z. instigated the pairing of partners since the children had not been exposed to this form of reading before. First, she paired the children according to similar reading abilities, but later she paired one of the better readers with one of the beginning readers.

Although Mrs. Z. paired the children, they decided which book they would share. Furthermore, they determined where they would read by their choice of book.

Toward the end of the third week of the study, the children were so familiar with the format for partner reading they began to select their own partners when they wanted to share a story. The selection criteria they employed to choose a partner, however, differed from Mrs. Z.'s. They used such guidelines as story interest.

Mrs. Z. also extended invitations for partner reading by asking individuals to share a story. For example, on October 26, 1990, she invited Scotty to share, *The Great Big Enormous Turnip* (Tolstoy) and on November 2, 1990, asked Charlie to read, *The Bee* (Ernst), with her. Behind each invitation, Mrs. Z. had a purpose, such as: (1) to introduce new stories to particular children; (2) to stretch children's reading strategies with more indepth stories with complex language structure; (3) to listen to children read and monitor their progress; (4) to share and enjoy a "lap style" reading event; (5) to encourage children to venture into new stories after they had heard them; (6) to help children learn how to negotiate meaning of the written word; and (7) to teach children reading strategies.

One other reading mode was observed during the time for Re-Reading Familiar Books, and that was children's reading aloud for assessment purposes. On alternate days Mrs. Z. completed a Running Record on particular children. Over a twelve day period she took at least one Running Record on each child.

Time for reading and sharing familiar books was one of the most crucial aspects of the literacy program. Mrs. Z. maintained that, "If we want our children to enjoy reading and want them to read, we need to give them time to experience the wonders and power of the written words between the covers of a good book. These (at-risk) children have very few opportunities to bathe in such joys. It is our responsibility to find time and allow them to be immersed in these delights" (November 16, 1990).

Read Aloud

Gathering on the carpet in the read aloud area with Mrs. Z. to hear a new story or listen again to a familiar one was a very special time for the six children and their peers. Never were they forced to read sections of the story for assessment of reading strategies. Never were they bombarded with questions to see if they were comprehending. It was always a time for the children to sit back, relax and enjoy a story for its content, language and power to ignite their imaginations. This was Mrs. Z.'s prime purpose for reading aloud -- to provide enjoyment and delight. As Huck et al (1987) asserts, "Children need to discover delight in books before they are asked to master the skills of reading" (p. 6).

Enjoyment was the main reason Mrs. Z. read *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* (Galdone) on October 2, 1990, *The Teeny Tiny Woman* (Galdone) on October 11, 1990, *The Big Fat Worm* (Russo) on November 2, 1990, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle) on November 5, 1990, and *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* (Burningham) on November 21, 1990. However, even though Mrs. J. maintained that enjoyment was the goal she strived for when she read a story, she had other purposes for reading aloud to the children. These additional purposes surfaced as the study unfolded.

One aim was to help the at-risk children understand the concept of the story.

Linking one story with another to help strengthen the children's understanding of story structure and meaning was another goal of Mrs. Z.'s read aloud sessions. She selected purposefully one book followed by another that had something in common with the first such as, story structure, characters, theme, or language. For instance, after reading *Henny Penny* (Galdone) on October 16, 1990, she read *The Story of Chicken Licken* (Omerod) on October 17, 1990 and discussed with the children how these stories were alike in their structure, characters and theme. They also talked about what was different.

Hearing stories re-read two and three times for the purpose of retelling them or creating an alternative text was another reason for Read Aloud time. For example, the children listened to Tolstoy's *The Great Big Enormous Turnip*, on October 9, 1990 and again on October 10, 1990 in order to familiarize themselves with the theme and plot of the story. Upon completion of the second reading, the children created a retelling of the story through the means of Shared Writing. They also entitled their text, *The Great Big Enormous Turnip*.

Read Aloud was scheduled everyday throughout the study. The length of each Read Aloud depended however on three factors: (1) the introduction and discussion which occurred before the book was read, (2) the reading of the story and discussion that transpired during the time of the reading, and (3) the follow-up discussion at the end of the story. Over the eight weeks of the study, the Read Aloud time varied in length from five to fifteen minutes per session. Needless to say, the length of the Read Aloud time during the last five weeks was closer to the fifteen minute duration because all three cited factors demanded more time. The children were more talkative, made more literary and lived experience links as well as proposed more questions regarding story meaning.

Shared Reading

Modelling reading behaviours during the literacy session was very important to the children's literacy development. It was an effective and enjoyable way to get children to learn how to handle written language, to learn how to negotiate the meaning of texts and to learn about the concepts of print. Much of the modelling was demonstrated through Shared Reading. Mrs. Z. was initially the model, but as the texts became familiar to the children, they took the responsibility of guiding the way through a text. My first observation of Shared Reading while the study was in progress occurred on October 1, 1990. At this time, it was evident that Mrs. Z. was the guide and modeled for the children the format of sharing a story. The following excerpt portrays Mrs. Z. demonstrating reading-like behaviours during a Shared Reading event:

> *Mrs. Z. calls the children to the chart stand to read the big book,* *Rosie's Walk*. *She holds the pointer and asks the children to read along with her. She points to the title and as she reads, they follow. As she begins the text she says (pointing to the top left hand corner), "We begin to read here." On the third page Peter and Barry read along with Mrs. Z. Scotty tries also.*
>
> *When they finish the third page, Mrs. Z. asks Scotty, "How did you know that this word was 'yard'?" Before he answers, Peter responds, "It gotta 'y' at the beginning." They continue to read and Scotty is the only one of the at-risk children who joins in.*

> *On the fifth page, Mrs. Z. asks, "Where do we start reading on this page, Simon?" He replies from his sitting position, "Up there". Mrs. Z. says, "Why don't you come and show us?" Simon does and he remains at Mrs. Z.'s side. They both hold the pointer and read the sentence along with most of the class.*

It is apparent from this excerpt that Mrs. Z. was showing the children where to begin reading a story, how to match their reading with the printed word and how letter/sound relationships function within a word. These are the reading strategies that proficient readers use to gain access to the written word.

By October 9, 1990, the teacher and children's roles reversed and Mrs. Z. followed and provided assistance when needed. For instance, on October 5, 1990, the children shared the reading of their big book, *Caps For Sale*, Simon pointed to the text as the teacher and children read along. Simon was one of the at-risk children who had much difficulty matching one-to-one. Although Mrs. Z. allowed him to point independently, he lost track on the fourth word. His pointer was ahead of the reading. Mrs. Z. noticed this and immediately held Simon's pointer hand and guided him along. Off and on through the pages she released his hand, giving him control.

Shared Reading was a prime opportunity to create a hunger for books and reading. Sharing together the excitement of unveiling a text the children created through collaborative means had a powerful influence on their desire to read and re-read the story. Even though these texts took a long time to create and were read and re-read numerous times during the composing act, when the final product was read for the first time a great deal of satisfaction was expressed. As Dianna exclaimed when she saw, *Where's Spot?*, in book format, "Did we really do that? I like that".

Shared Writing

Shared Writing was a collaborative way for the at-risk children and their peers to create books to read and to learn the important conventions of writing. During the initial Shared Writing events, Mrs. Z. was the scribe as the children dictated a story to her. For example, when the children were composing their listing of places in *A Dark, Dark Tale*, Mrs. Z. was the scribe throughout the story. While she was writing she made reference to specific aspects of writing.

As the children gained an understanding of the Shared Writing process, they were asked to participate in the writing. For example, on November 7, 1990, they listed the things the hungry caterpillar ate, Charlie wrote 'petes' for 'pears'.

Since the major purpose of Shared Writing was to familiarize the children with the appropriate conventions of writing, the final spelling of each word was always correct. It was a time to work out words together. Mrs. Z. would allow each child to write what he thought was the word, phrase or sentence and she would add or delete where necessary with the children's assistance.

The purposes of Shared Writing evolved for Mrs. Z. as she became more accustomed to the literacy event. The children, too, grew in understanding of how to write collaboratively and later, transferred their knowledge to independent writing.

Independent Writing

Practice in writing is a necessity if we want the children to learn its conventions. Mrs. Z. held this belief just as highly for the at-risk children as for any other children. Hence, Independent Writing, a time for each child to express his/her thoughts in written form, became a priority literacy event in the literature-based program for Mrs. Z.'s at-risk children.

A purpose for Independent Writing that surfaced as the children were involved with their individual writing was the importance of writing as a source for learning how to read. Through writing Mrs. Z. noticed that Simon and Charlie became more aware of print and its characteristics. In fact, she maintained that Simon, who exhibited difficulty in matching one-to-one in reading, developed this awareness through his written text. She said, "He has to slow down, think of the sounds he hears and their sequence, as he writes. He is forced to look at the written word as he writes".

Establishing authorship was another important reason for Independent Writing. Mrs. Z. observed that the children maintained a great deal of interest in their own writing and were willing to pursue it over long periods of time.

Another purpose of Independent Writing was freedom to communicate ideas in written form without external barriers. The children were always given blank paper to write on. Such barriers as lines were never a factor to impede their thought.

Although Mrs. Z. had specific purposes for Independent Writing from the beginning of the study, she was flexible enough to incorporate children's purposes also.

Extensions

"Children extend their understanding of literature when they have an opportunity to represent and manipulate the elements of literature in some concrete form" (Huck et al., 1987, p. 678). This was the main purpose for conducting the extensions in the study.

For example, on October 29, 1990, Mrs. Z. provided the children with the opportunity to achieve greater meaning from Hutchins' *Good-Night, Owl!* by having them create the tree which the owl slept in and add the animals and birds that kept him awake. Understanding the literary concept of character was an aim of Mrs. Z.'s in this extension.

Another purpose Mrs. Z. hoped to achieve through the extensions was promoting greater interest in books to make them memorable. She maintained that if the children gained deep satisfaction from the books, they would want to return to them over and over. And this was truly the case.

Never did they voice dissatisfaction or show boredom with any revisited story. Each visit appeared to be as interesting as the first.

Monitoring

Monitoring the children's reading process was a vital guide for Mrs. Z. in her planning for the literacy session. It was from the monitoring that the children's reading strategies were assessed and direction given for the literacy instructional program. Concepts About Print and Running Record (Clay, 1979) provided Mrs. Z. with information related to what the children knew about the reading process and what needed to be taught. For example, on October 9, 1990 when Mrs. Z. assessed Simon's awareness of print through the Concepts About Print, she noted that he still did not know "word by word matching". Hence, he needed further help in focusing in on words. She, therefore, often had him pointing with the pointer as she and the children read from the big books during Shared Reading. From Scotty's Running Record of November 2, 1990, she observed through the analysis of his errors that he relied heavily on meaning to gain access to unfamiliar text. She noted, "(He) needs to develop visual cues as well. (I must) keep focusing him into that".

From the children's writing samples she noted if they were still using random letters to represent words, such as Susan (November 14, 1990), or if they were beginning to use letter/sound relationships, such as Scotty (November 6, 1990).

Home Reading Program

The development of a literacy bond between the children and their parents was promoted through the home reading program. Each night the children selected a book to read to their parents. Mrs. Z. had a number of books available for such use that the children could read. Sometimes the parents were asked to read to the children. This component will be extended and become more comprehensive as the year progresses. A reading log was kept and completed by each child.

Developing Thematic Literature Units

After the first week of study Mrs. Z. and I met to review the week's literacy events and to decide where we would venture with the evolving literacy program for the at-risk children along with the other First Graders in her class. We decided to develop indepth thematic literature units. We felt that a curriculum model of this nature would provide the children longer time to internalize the language and content of stories, to discover delight in books, to develop literacy awareness and appreciation, and to practise and stretch their literacy skills in meaningful and purposeful ways using familiar reading materials.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHILDREN'S LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

A formal measurement used to describe and compare the children's literacy development over the course of the investigation was select sections of Clay's Diagnostic Survey. This Survey was first administered to each child during the first two weeks of the study. It was given again at the end of the study. The results of both testing sessions are reported in Table 3. (The denominator indicates the ceiling score.)

Table 3. Results of Pre-Test and Post-Test Diagnostic Survey

Name	Letter Identification		Concepts About Print		Running Record	
	10-1/4-90	11-28/30-90	10-1/4-90	11-26/30-90	10-10/15-90	11-26/30-90
Dianna	78%	100%	66%	90%	-	Level 2
Charlie	66%	100%	16%	78%	-	Level 1
Martin	59%	100%	37%	74%	-	Level 1
Scotty	70%	100%	58%	94%	-	Level 2
Simon	39%	70%	37%	74%	-	-
Susan	47%	74%	49%	90%	-	Level 1

Despite the limitations of the testing instrument, the results do reveal valuable information. Gains were made in all test areas. Particularly high gains were made in children's knowledge about print concepts as well as their ability to read text. In regard to Concepts About Print, the children's understanding increased between 24% to 62% in an eight week period. For example, Dianna's Concepts About Print score (October 1, 1990) was 66% and (November 28, 1990) it was 90%, while Charlie's score (October 1, 1990) was 16% and on November 30, 1990 it was 78%.

When children were first given a Running Record at the beginning of the study, neither of them could read text at the lowest level, i.e., Level 1. When assessed at the end of the study, all but one child, Simon, could read level 1 with 90% accuracy or higher, Scotty read Level 2 at 92%. These gains indicate a 100% increase to a 200% increase over the duration of the study.

Writing Assessment

The children's independent writing also provided insights into their literacy growth. In examining writing samples gathered during the course of the study, it was evident that their knowledge of composing showed impressive gains in a relatively short time.

The first independent writing extension the children participated in was writing a sentence about anything they wished. On October 20, 1990, Dianna wrote "iMHiDKDce" (My house is blue.); on November 14, 1990, she wrote "I hav a CAt it pav mvt" (I have a cat. It plays music.). Here Dianna reveals that her command of writing has increased impressively. The first entry indicates a random set of letters to represent an idea. The second entry shows that she is cognizant of individual words, as well as letter/sound relationships. Martin's writings were one word, i.e., October 10, 1990 he wrote "Ghcholorors" to represent ghostbusters. By October 18, 1990 however, he was generating sentences. "I lic cos I Lic Halloloween" (I like ghosts. I like Halloween.)

Not only were the children increasing their understanding of the writing conventions, but their written texts were increasing in length. On October 10, 1990, Susan wrote "HeoAbcsRoau" (Clouds). On November 28, 1990, she wrote, "Mi das m preey yipree ry bee dsik bLe tet THe iiJra peedsiH Ble eet Likket tHey kondL eft otHe preey." (A story about her pretty new blue dress.)

Stories generated from the books the children were acting upon through their literature units, had closer approximations to the standard writing conventions. For instance, Simon's journal entry of November 4, 1990 was "Ica aem elm wde wois wIw D' (I have a turtle.) His independent writing about where Spot (*Where's Spot?*) might be hiding was 'S He BeHinD tH DoR" (Is he behind the door?) It was apparent from the study that the more the children were exposed to book language, the more familiar it became to them, thus readily accessed for writing purposes.

It was noted that the at-risk children wrote more easily when they had to carry out a writing activity related to a book, than when they had to generate their own ideas. Building the children's repertoire of stories gave them greater access to book language and flexibility in using such language in their story writing.

Some growth in punctuation awareness was observed in Dianna's writing. On November 18, 1990, she wrote "I Lik RanBos." (I like rainbows.) Here a period is used after rainbows.

Writing growth was apparent in the children's awareness of the different functions of writing and the writing forms these functions require. They not only wrote stories, they created listings, identified specifics by labelling, and wrote dialogue.

Progress in writing was evident with all the children. However, some made greater gains than others. Dianna, Martin and Charlie showed the greatest development, but Simon, Scotty and Susan did show growth and interest in the composing act.

The Children's Literary Growth

The children's literary knowledge grew as a result of their hearing and interacting with many children's books as well as Mrs. Z.'s style of questioning related to literary aspects. Mrs. Z. never explicitly taught the children specifics about story structure or meaning. Nor did she "have a lesson on how to interpret illustrations". It was through her book discussion style and the questions asked and comments offered during the literacy session that the children's literary knowledge increased. They learned implicitly the meaning and usage of literary language, how stories have characters and settings, how to negotiate meaning from texts and the importance of illustrations to the story.

Story Meaning

Gaining access to the meaning of a story is achieved by different means or by a combination of these means. Three such avenues were noted in this study: prediction, interpretation and linking. These ways of determining meaning were promoted through the teacher's questions, e.g., "What do you think is going to happen next?", "Do you know other stories that remind you of this one?" and comments, e.g., "Yes, you were right." During the course of the study the children began to make predictions, interpretations and literary links without suggestion from Mrs. Z.

THE LITERACY PROGRAM

Children's Book Choice

An examination of this literacy component revealed the determinants the children used in selecting books to read. It appeared that they chose books for a variety of reasons. Some were explicitly stated while others seemed to be selected for tacit reasons. The greatest influence was the power to read aloud. Ëach book that Mrs. Z. read frequently was browsed through or read and re-read the following day during time for Re-Reading Familiar Books. Scotty and Simon often took the book as their first choice in the next session. After hearing *The Wheels on the Bus* Scotty immediately asked to have it during Re-Reading Familiar Books time.

The children also chose a book on the recommendation of a friend. The recommendation often was suggested when two children wanted the same book. Simon was caught in this situation after Alice had taken *The Napping House*. He told her he wanted the book, so she suggested that they read it together.

Text Reading Complexity

The children selected books daily which varied in degree of text reading. They read books that tested and stretched their reading strategies. However, intermingled with the more difficult books were those that they could handle with ease. Scotty's attempt at *King Bidgood's In The Bathtub* (November 19, 1990) showed that he was willing to give this book a try even though he knew it was difficult for him. Having heard the story on two previous occasions, he was interested in giving it a try. And he did. He told the parts he could not read and read the parts he could.

Partner reading lured the at-risk children into more difficult books. Knowing there would be sharing of the text was comforting. As Martin was reading *Good-Night, Owl!* Kevin helped him along in a non-threatening manner.

The need, therefore, for the at-risk children to have a variety of books available with varying text reading levels as well as different literary genres was evident. A well-stocked book collection is a vital component to a successful literacy program.

Value of Re-Reading

When the children first heard a story their attention was directed mostly to the illustrations. Their questions and comments were focused on the pictures. It was on the second and third reading of a story that questions and comments centred on the text.

Re-reading a story allowed the children to return to the text and give greater attention to the written word. It provided them a second or third opportunity to uncover the embedded meaning which they may not have gotten the first time through.

Shared Reading and Shared Writing

Shared Reading and Shared Writing were seen as one literacy component in the literacy session. It was difficult to separate the two. Shared Writing was never completed without an abundance of Shared Reading. For example, when the children were composing their listing of places Sally looked for Spot, they read each word after it was written. After every cluster of three words the children would return to the beginning of the list and read it in its entirety. The completion of the list required another shared reading of the listing. Since the list was used the next day, it was re-read again before the activity began.

Independent Writing

In observing the children's Independent Writing process it became evident that each child, regardless of his/her writing ability followed the same process as in Shared Writing. That is, he/she created text, wrote, read what he/she wrote, returned to the beginning of his/her story to pick up the flow of the storyline, then created new text, wrote, read.

This process of Independent Writing helped the children maintain the sequence of the story and invited self-imposed editing.

Another finding related to Independent Writing and also found in Shared Writing was the ease and interest the children took in composing texts. This appears to be associated with the content of the writing. Knowing the story well helped the children direct their energies to the conventions of writing as well as the generation of ideas.

Writing for some children, particularly the at-risk children, becomes a monumental task when they have to create text as well as write it. Their life experiences and limited literary exposure make it difficult for them to generate easily ideas that they wish to express in written form. Retelling familiar stories and creating alternative texts based on re-read stories alleviates some of the stress placed on the children to create and write. It is apparent from this study that the composing act becomes more inviting and less threatening when the children have a story structure and content already within them.

Extensions

The extensions, ways of returning to books to bring greater meaning to them or ways to extend the books, were part of the literacy lesson. Each extension the children participated in was related to a read aloud and a thematic unit. It was never an isolated task.

The extensions in the study included Shared Writing/Shared Reading activities as well as the Independent Writing tasks. In addition, extensions included drama, story map making, illustrating, taking a survey and creating a comparison chart. The latter extensions were done co-operatively and became the real nucleus of collaborative learning. It was during this time the children began to build and enhance their literacy community through the communicative, supportive networking system they created. They discussed among themselves the instructions and directions of the activity they were going to participate in, they created "small" talk about specific literacy issues and they provided help to each other as it was requested.

Monitoring

The information gathered from the Concepts About Print and the Running Record was important to Mrs. Z.'s daily planning in two respects. First, knowing the literacy strategies the children knew and did not know affected how she "taught" during specific literacy events such as, Shared Reading and Shared Writing. For example, when she had noted that all the children knew where to start reading a story, she no longer said, "This is where we start to read" at the beginning of Shared Reading. Similarly, when the children knew where to start writing on a page, she discontinued making such a reference when she began a Shared Writing task.

Secondly, the information Mrs. Z. gathered from the Running Record affected how she worked with individual children. Her analysis of the assessment provided valuable information that aided Mrs. Z. in enhancing each child's self-improving system. She knew just where he was in developing his strategies and where and when to scaffold the child's learning.

Home Reading Program

This aspect of the program gave the children's parents an opportunity to share books that the children could generally read. It helped to build a literacy bond between child and parents. Although this component is vital in the eyes of Mrs. Z. and myself more attention needs to be given to it so that it becomes more comprehensive. Even with what exists now, the parents were extremely pleased. Such comments as, "I know how Dianna can read now.", or "This is the first time I have heard Scotty read -- it's wonderful." suggested that the program was having some impact.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The Problem of the Study

A number of primary age children enter school with a deficiency in their literacy development that makes it most difficult for them to meet the demands of the school curriculum. These children are often provided literacy instructional programs which are contrary to present theoretical and practical perspectives regarding how literacy emerges and how children learn.

The purpose of this study was therefore to develop and implement a literacy program for six at-risk First Graders based on a theoretical framework derived from recent research findings related to emergent literacy and young children's learning. A descriptive account and analysis were made of the literacy components that comprised the program and how they were interrelated and interdependent. In addition, the study described the effectiveness of the program on the children's literacy development. Specific observations were directed toward how the literacy components enhanced the children's literacy skills and strategies.

Since this was a naturalistic study employing an ethnographic approach to the research, the findings were related to a specific setting and participants. However, generalizations can be appropriately made which are transferable to similar settings. In the following section, a discussion of the implications for the development and implementation of literacy programs for at-risk children and teacher education is presented. The conclusion suggests directions for further research.

Implications for Literacy Instructional Programs

1. *A rich and varied book collection should be readily accessible to children.* The book collection that developed over the course of this study was received positively and was used extensively by the children and teacher. The children's literature books, big books and children-made books provided the children with the opportunity to freely choose familiar books to read and share, and to work things out for themselves, promoting their independence in reading. The books considered for the collection were introduced to the children in some manner before being displayed, familiarizing the children with the book language and story. Familiarity of this nature was a powerful influence on the children's choice of books to read. Important too was the location and arrangement of the books.

2. *The daily literacy session should schedule time for the children to hear books read aloud, for the children to read and share familiar books and for them to write independently or collaboratively.* In this study, hearing stories read aloud had significant impact on the children's desire to read. It motivated the children to persevere over complex texts for long uninterrupted time. Moreover, reading aloud helped the children to learn how a story was structured and how to gain access to its meaning. It provided the children with the opportunity to become familiar with book language and increased their repertoire of stories broadening their literary landscape. This influenced their choice of book for reading independently or with a partner. Most importantly reading aloud provided the children with time to enjoy the delight of books fostering their desire to read.

   Time to read "real" books of their own choice gave the children an opportunity to try their reading strategies on familiar books and stretch these strategies on more difficult texts, thus building on their self-improving system. The more sophisticated their system became, the more independent they became as readers. It also provided time to share favourites with friends, and to learn the value of collaboration in learning to read.

   If children are to become proficient writers they require time and practice. The children showed great delight in composing their own texts through Shared or Independent Writing. Their authorship fostered more writing and reading. Knowing stories and retelling them made the writing process somewhat less demanding than if they had to create the entire text on their own.

3. *Literacy programs should include Shared Reading, Extensions, a Literacy Monitoring System and a Home Reading Program.* The children in this study participated in Shared Reading mostly in regard to Shared Writing. The two literacy components were interdependent and provided the children with numerous situations to witness effective reading- and writing-like behaviours modeled by the teacher. It was noted that the children did indeed use many of the reading and writing strategies they observed through Shared Reading/Shared Writing in their independent reading and writing work. In some instances, the children employed the modelling behaviour when providing assistance to their peers during literacy activities.

   The literacy extensions invited the children back into the story to gain greater meaning of the story or extended them beyond the story so that they had to synthesize their knowledge from a number of sources. They provided the children with a variety of experiences with the same story. Inviting the children to revisit and re-read stories helped to make the book language and story more familiar and thus easier to read. The children's confidence in their reading rose as they became more successful in reading a book.

A vital component to the program was the constant monitoring of the children's progress in reading and writing. The information gained from the monitoring guided the planning of the literacy sessions and the teaching strategies for individual assistance.

The Home Reading Program was a powerful informing component for parents. Through the stories and poems taken home daily, parents became aware of their child's literacy progress. This became a positive factor in reinforcing the child's literacy growth, as well as building a literacy partnership between home and school. Some books the parents were informed to read to their child. This event helped to build a closer bond between the parent(s) and the child. In addition, it provided support for building a literacy partnership between home and school.

4. *The literacy program should evolve from the children's literacy needs.* The basis from which the literacy program was developed in this study was the children's knowledge of literacy skills and strategies. Knowing the reading and writing skills and strategies of the children, how early literacy emerges and how children learn became the impetus from which the thematic literature units were developed, literacy sessions planned and the materials selected. The children's needs and interests were therefore the core from which the program developed.

5. *The literacy activities should be integrated and interrelated.* The provision of indepth thematic literature units gave the children much time and varied opportunities to practise their literacy skills and strategies in familiar context. Children need time to internalize book language and content of stories, to discover delight in books, to develop literary awareness and appreciation and to practice and stretch their literacy skills and strategies in meaningful and purposeful ways using familiar reading materials in a variety of experiences.

6. *The ultimate purpose of a literacy program should be to develop children who not only know how to read and write but become readers and writers who love and enjoy reading and writing.* Too frequently at-risk children are drilled on skills of reading and writing without ever having the chance to enjoy reading and writing. In this program poor readers were treated the same way as gifted.

Implications for Teacher Education

1. *If teachers are to make changes in their literacy programs, professional development related to literacy learning should become a priority issue at School Board District Level.* This teacher's theoretical knowledge and practical ideas related to early literacy development were enhanced by her reading of

professional materials during the study, taking time to reflect on the day's literacy events and discussing literacy matters with the investigator. School Board District personnel need to develop short and long term professional development plans that will provide teachers with the opportunity to be knowledgeable about current research findings related to early literacy and to learn meaningful and purposeful practical ideas to support literacy growth.

2. *If teachers are to make changes in their literacy programs, teacher educators at the university level should provide relevant courses to early literacy development.* It is at the university level that the most recent research findings are most likely to be first known. In this regard, teacher educators need to develop courses and seminars related to these findings for classroom teachers, especially those who have been in the field for a number of years. These courses and seminars should present the research, theory and recommend practical teaching strategies in an integrative way so that teachers can implement the new ideas successfully in their classrooms.

3. *If literacy programs are to change, communication among the Universities, School Board Districts and Provincial Department of Education needs to be open and continuous.* Classroom teachers are often torn in deciding what is best for their children. The Universities suggest specific teaching/learning ideas, the Department of Education demands different teaching/learning strategies and the School Districts request something distinct from the others. The classroom teacher is left to filter all the information and decide what is the best instructional procedures for the children by incorporating directives from the three sources. If we are to make gains in literacy learning, some common theoretical and practical perspectives must be presented.

4. *Teacher support groups or networking should be fostered.* This teacher recognized the many benefits gained from communicating regularly with others in her profession. The interaction was invaluable. Suggested teaching/learning ideas surfaced as well as practical and constructive criticism. Teacher educators, i.e., university faculty and school board district personnel should support teachers in developing and maintaining groups of this nature.

5. *Teacher educators should consider promoting teachers as researchers in their classrooms.* If change is to occur within the classrooms, teachers need to learn ways and means of identifying what needs changing without always having to be dependent on an outside person(s) or institution to initiate change. Teachers who are knowledgeable about conducting micro-studies in their classrooms will be more aware of their teaching style, the value of children's interactions and can begin to make changes without long delays waiting for others to tell them what needs changing.

6. *Teacher educators need to reconsider their teaching/learning perspectives related to at-risk children.* At-risk children generally have literacy gaps when they enter school, but this does not mean they think or learn differently than other children. As Frank Smith (1987) maintains, these children's brains do well at, "comprehending, remembering, learning, reasoning, imagining, intuition, and recognizing patterns in all things". The brain fails only in "contrived circumstances" (p. 1). That is, the children are confronted by teaching/learning situations that are not directly connected to anything they already know. The courses provided teachers of at-risk children often recommend "contrived circumstances" teaching/learning instructional programs. These children need instructional programs that build on what they already know and allow them to be in constant contact with peers who are successful readers and writers. The programs need to provide learning situations that are meaningful and relevant to the children.

7. *Teachers need to have teacher educators in their classrooms on a regular basis.* Since students of teacher education are often presented with a segmented undergraduate program, it would be helpful for novice teachers if teacher educators and/or school district personnel would visit their classrooms to discuss, demonstrate and collaborate on integrative teaching/learning strategies. They need to create a supportive teaching community so the at-risk children will receive quality instruction.

8. *Effective change in literacy programs requires the efforts of the entire school system.* All primary teachers and administrators need to be knowledgeable about current research in literacy learning if change efforts are to have significant and long lasting impact. Working with individual teachers is only a beginning and is not enough. Having an entire staff committed to change and participating in it, brings about the change more readily and in a more encouraging and supportive context.

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